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REVISED EDITION

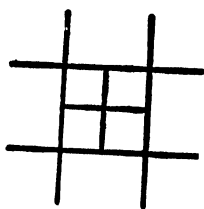
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My dear H. M. HARWOOD,

You are responsible, though unwittingly, for this revision of Waste. When we agreed you should revive it, I never thought of reading it through. Did you? I said lightly that one or two alterations might be needed. Then, later, I turned to the job—and this is the result. I doubt if one scrap of the old dialogue survives ; the story and the characters are here, that is all. So it is a thing I had—dramatically—to say twenty years ago, said as I'd say it now. But now I'd have something different to say.

Yours very gratefully (if I ought to be !)

HARLEY GRANVILLE-BARKER.



Waste

Written 1906.

Re-written 1926.

CYRIL HORSHAM.
LORD CHARLES CANTILUPE
GEORGE FARRANT.
RUSSELL BLACKBOROUGH.
HENRY TREBELL.
GILBERT WEDGECROFT.
JUSTIN O'CONNELL.
WALTER KENT.
VIVIAN SAUMAREZ.
A BUTLER.

COUNTESS MORTIMER.
LADY JULIA FARRANT.
FRANCES TREBELL.
AMY O'CONNELL.
LUCY DAVENPORT.
BERTHA.

The first act at Shapters, George Farrant's house in Hertfordshire; the second at Trebell's house in Berkeley Street; the third at Mr. Horsham's in Queen Anne's Gate; the fourth at Trebell's again.

WASTE

ACT I

Shapters, which is thirty miles or so from London, is a typically English house. Its kitchens are Tudor ; it faces the world looking seventeenth century ; from the garden you would call it Queen Anne. But the sanctity of age is upon even this last and not least ruthless of its patchings and scrappings, and the effect of the whole is beautiful.

It is a Sunday evening in summer, and in one of the smaller sitting-rooms LADY JULIA FARRANT has been playing to some of her week-end guests. She is a woman of fifty ; she plays very well for an amateur, she has just launched into Chopin's shortest prelude (Op. 28, No. 20). Her listeners are her mother, LADY MORTIMER, a genuinely old lady and dowered with all the beauty of age ; FRANCES TREBELL, a woman in the fifties who has nothing smart about her, her face showing more thought than feeling ; MRS. O'CONNELL, a charming woman, who takes care she does charm ; LUCY DAVENPORT, a girl in her twenties, more grave than gay ; and WALTER KENT, just such a young man as the average English father would wish his son to be. They are all attentive. The room is not so brightly lit but that one can see in the moonlight—for the curtains are drawn back and the long windows are open—a paved garden set in a courtyard of some sort, and lights in the rooms beyond. The room is evidently a woman's room, and its owner's taste, one would guess, was formed in the school of

Burne-Jones. Having finished the prelude, LADY JULIA shuts the piano and, after a moment, leaves it.

WALTER KENT. Oh . . . was that "God save the King"? I'd have stood up.

LADY MORTIMER. Thank you, my dear Julia.

LADY JULIA. Thank you for listening, mamma. That's the polite reply, isn't it?

FRANCES TREBELL. Chopin for a finish, Julia . . . after John Sebastian!

LADY JULIA. Allow us that much emotional indulgence.

WALTER KENT. Romantic moonrise into a starlit sky.

LUCY DAVENPORT. Five marks to you for an epigram, Walter.

WALTER KENT. Don't be so frightfully surprised when I say something clever.

FRANCES TREBELL. I prefer the stars.

AMY O'CONNELL. And I'd been wondering what was missing.

LADY JULIA finds herself a chair; it happens not to be very near MRS. O'CONNELL.

LADY JULIA. Don't you like Bach? Why didn't you say so?

AMY O'CONNELL. I respect the old gentleman . . . but he makes me feel a demi-semi-quaver of a creature.

LADY JULIA catches sight of a book—a quite severe-looking book—upon LUCY DAVENPORT's lap.

LADY JULIA. Lucy . . . were you reading while I played?

LUCY DAVENPORT. No, indeed, Cousin Julia. But I keep hold of it . . . it soaks in up the arm.

AMY O'CONNELL. I spent half a fugue trying to make out the title.

The book is handed to her; LUCY's arm at full stretch will just do it.

Walter Bagehot . . . the English Constitution. Bagehot

and Bach! What company I'm in! Dear Lucy, are you doing it for a bet?

LUCY DAVENPORT. No; it's good stuff.

AMY O'CONNELL. So all the authorities declare. Yes . . . and one ought to be able to say: I've read Bagehot. You can say that, Julia, can't you?

LADY JULIA. I can . . . even truthfully. But I don't.

AMY O'CONNELL. And Frances has lectured on Bagehot.

FRANCES TREBELL. No. Mathematics were my bread and butter.

AMY O'CONNELL. And Lady Mortimer will tell us that she once saw Bagehot plain. And I'm sure he was plain.

LADY MORTIMER. Yes . . . he used to come to my father's house . . . with Mr. Richard Hutton . . . when I was small. They had long beards . . . which frightened me.

AMY O'CONNELL. That's better. Now, Mr. Kent, . . . what's your contribution?

WALTER KENT. I have been lectured on Bagehot . . . and examined on Bagehot. And it never, please Heaven, can happen again.

LUCY DAVENPORT. Shame!

AMY O'CONNELL. Well . . . if I'd only thought of it I might have put all you clever, well-brought-up people in the shade by protesting loudly at dinner to the distinguished statesmen each side of me that I'd never even heard of Bagehot! Though I have . . . oh yes, in my hot youth, I have!

LADY JULIA. Who did bring you up, Amy?

Her tone is ever so slightly tart, as MRS. O'CONNELL *is quick to hear—and she counters.*

AMY O'CONNELL. Dear Julia . . . there's no scandal about it! I was orphaned at two and bequeathed to a great-uncle, who was a parson and an atheist and too

clever for his job and too conceited to ask for a better one. And he thought the whole duty of woman was to be pretty. . . .

LADY MORTIMER. You gave him no trouble there, my dear.

AMY O'CONNELL. Kind Lady Mortimer! Pretty and agreeable and helpless. He drank casks of Madeira . . . and that was old-fashioned, too . . . and had a dreadful temper.

FRANCES TREBELL. Cause and effect, possibly.

AMY O'CONNELL. I think suppressed atheism was worse for it. So I married at seventeen and turned Catholic and went to Ireland with Justin. Then Justin turned Sinn Féin and I came back . . . and every one was so kind. And that's enough about me. But if I'd only been sent to Cambridge instead . . . and been lectured at by Frances, perhaps, on mathematics and morals . . . what a very different woman I should be! More like Lucy . . . though never so nice. Or I might have gone in for politics and been a power in the land.

FRANCES TREBELL. I don't see you tramping the Lobbies in those pretty shoes.

AMY O'CONNELL. No, no . . . a power behind the throne . . . like Julia. But, of course, never so powerful.

LADY JULIA. [*a shade wryly ; only a shade.*] I'm not so powerful, I fear.

AMY O'CONNELL. [*who can be very innocent at times.*] Aren't you? Don't you make history? I thought all the diaries that can't possibly be published for heaven knows how long must be full of you. I thought we were all here this week-end helping you make history. The election coming . . . this horrid hypocritical Lib-Labour government to be beautifully beaten . . . dear Mr. Horsham to be sent for again to save the country . . . with Mr. Blackborough

to find the money and Mr. Trebell to find the brains. And that you were arranging it all, Julia.

LADY JULIA. I wish the country's salvation were so simple a matter.

This may sound a little smug ; but LADY JULIA does not like you to chaff her unless she likes you very much. GEORGE FARRANT'S arrival breaks the conversation. He is about his wife's age ; a pleasant, very honest fellow, bred to big affairs, but with no other particular qualification for them. Yet this, allied to his honesty and good-nature, has let him hold his place among them respectably enough.

FARRANT. Blackborough's going, Julia.

LADY JULIA. I thought he must have gone. What time is it ?

FARRANT. Ten past eleven.

LADY JULIA. Well . . . you've had something of a talk, you four.

AMY O'CONNELL. What about . . . or can't we be told ?

FARRANT. About the Goths in Italy and the Normans in Sicily . . . Maltese fever . . . Marriage in Morocco . . . Witchcraft . . . Oliver Cromwell and the Jews . . . William III.'s love affairs and Bergson's philosophy. I forget what else.

RUSSELL BLACKBOROUGH follows his host into the room. One might more suitably say that he arrives. For to arrive is his vocation, and he by no means agrees with the proverb-maker that to travel is better. He is an able man ; he has all the virtues that make for success, and, if sensitiveness is not among them, yet he is not an unkindly man. His voice, perhaps, is louder than it need be ; and even when he is silent you always know he is there.

BLACKBOROUGH. Good-bye, Lady Julia. A delightful week-end.

LADY JULIA. Whatever hour will you be home ?

BLACKBOROUGH. Not before the moon's down. But I'm due in Birmingham bright and early to-morrow. Good-bye, Lady Mortimer.

He is rounding the room with his good-byes.

LADY MORTIMER. You're a marvel, Mr. Blackborough. And never a holiday, you were telling me.

BLACKBOROUGH. I hate holidays. Want to know my secret ?

AMY O'CONNELL. Oh . . . please !

BLACKBOROUGH. Learn to sleep at odd moments

AMY O'CONNELL. In public ?

BLACKBOROUGH. Yes.

AMY O'CONNELL. That's no advice to give a woman.

BLACKBOROUGH. Why not ?

AMY O'CONNELL. I saw you asleep after tea. Good-bye.

The pin-point does not prick him. Thick-skinned he may be, but, to do him justice, he has no unmanly vanities.

BLACKBOROUGH. Besides . . . we poor politicians must work double shifts for our bread and butter while we're in opposition. It's hardly safe when you're in office to hold on to a share . . . much less a directorship. How's the wretched capitalist to live? We can't all have Copper magnates for great-grandfathers like you, Farrant . . . or be Company lawyers like your brother . . . and they'd not have him in public life in America, Miss Trebell. Sorry I missed the music.

He really is. He likes music and the vigour of it. He sang in the Leeds choir in his young days.

LADY JULIA. I left you alone. I thought you'd be talking shop.

BLACKBOROUGH. No, no, no . . . we'd no shop to talk. And when will Horsham talk shop if he can help it? Idealist philosophy we finished with. That counts me out . . . I don't know the jargon. But I strongly

suspect there's not too much sense in anything that can't be discussed in language the ordinary educated man can understand.

The BUTLER has entered.

THE BUTLER. Mr. Blackborough's car, my lady.

BLACKBOROUGH *has finished his round, but for*

WALTER KENT. *Standing by him, he addresses* LADY

JULIA.

BLACKBOROUGH. Do you go campaigning? No . . . Farrant's seat is safe. Come and speak for me.

LADY JULIA. [*as who should say, with all courtesy: The impudence!*] I have never spoken in public in my life . . . and I never shall.

BLACKBOROUGH. [*almost welcoming the snub; LADY JULIA can impress him, though it would not become him to own it.*] Ah . . . that's the true Tory tradition. We've to leave it to you ladies, though, to keep it up nowadays.

FARRANT. A September dissolution, too! Labour would let us in for that.

LADY MORTIMER. Is it to please the partridges? But they have no votes yet, have they?

AMY O'CONNELL. Poor partridges . . . with nobody but nobodies left to shoot at them!

FARRANT. I mean to get a fortnight, though . . . whatever happens.

BLACKBOROUGH. We shall come back this time, I don't doubt. [*Then with masterful suddenness to WALTER.*] Are we to find you a seat, young man?

WALTER KENT. Not yet, thank you. I've my trade to learn.

BLACKBOROUGH. Trebell's taking you on.

WALTER KENT. Yes.

BLACKBOROUGH. [*though somehow he doesn't seem to mean quite—quite—what he says.*] Lucky fellow! You'll learn a lot.

FARRANT. Classical tripos at Cambridge. Now he has to go to Pitman's for shorthand and type-writing.

BLACKBOROUGH. A year at the Central Office would have done you some good. I could have got you in there. Our young men in the House don't start by learning . . . as they ought . . . how a Party is run and how votes are got.

WALTER KENT. [*very simply : one likes him for it.*] I think I'm more interested in ideas.

BLACKBOROUGH. Then why go in for politics ?

LADY JULIA. Really, Mr. Blackborough !

BLACKBOROUGH. [*genially.*] I know, I know . . . that raises a laugh from the intellectual snobs. Ideas have their place, undoubtedly. We need them to draw upon. But the statesman's task is the accommodation of stubborn fact to shifting circumstance . . . and in effect to the practical capacities of the average stupid man. Democracy involves the admission of that.

LADY JULIA. [*whose patience is being tried.*] I am at least not a democrat, Mr. Blackborough.

BLACKBOROUGH. Nor I . . . more of a democrat than I need to be. We've all to bow down a bit nowadays in the House of Rimmon. But, stampede a people with ideas . . . ! Why . . . look at the Russian Revolution . . . look at the Chinese Revolution . . . look at India . . . look at Poplar. We live in dangerous times.

LADY MORTIMER. So my dear grandfather used to say.

BLACKBOROUGH. And no doubt he was right. The salvation of this country so far has been its imperviousness to abstract ideas. The difficulty of doing anything definite by party politics . . . strange as this sounds . . . is what keeps us sane and lets us get on with our business. I am a good enough democrat to wish to save democracy from itself . . . and from the ideology and the doctrinaire. And I wish very much that this present government weren't leaving us such

a crop of problems to deal with. The Dominion Treaties . . . the Emigration muddle . . . Disestablishment! They've shown great political wisdom in leaving us to tackle them. Well . . . we must just keep our heads and go slow . . . go slow. Good-night . . . good-night.

These last farewells have the savour of businesslike blessings. He departs, and FARRANT hardly allows himself a smile as he follows him to see him off. But the rest of the company is visibly relieved.

LADY MORTIMER. Most impressive.

AMY O'CONNELL. Shouldn't we have cheered, or said "Order" or "Divide" or something?

FRANCES TREBELL. Alas . . . one must never suppose a man a fool because he talks nonsense.

LADY JULIA. And I begged George to see he had his say after dinner. He'd been saving that up for them . . . and he empties it over us. I will not be called an intellectual snob by Mr. Blackborough. Is he out of my house yet?

WALTER KENT. I expect so.

LADY JULIA. Then I consider him a hog of a man.

Having said so, she forgives MR. BLACKBOROUGH.

LADY MORTIMER. But why have you let the Blackboroughs of this world become a power in your Party, Julia?

LADY JULIA. They think they are.

LADY MORTIMER. I should give this one a peerage without more delay.

LADY JULIA. Heavens . . . he wouldn't take it. I know . . . we used to quiet them that way. He wants the Treasury . . . and he'll get it some day, I suppose. He's useful . . . he knows where the votes come from . . . and he does raise funds from people that one really couldn't truckle to oneself. And if it pleases him to imagine that he "bosses" us . . .

LADY MORTIMER. Julia, don't be complacent. The man rattles you in his pocket with the rest of his loose change.

LADY JULIA. Well, mamma . . . if you'll tell me how to prevent undesirable people joining a Party . . . we'll all be very much obliged to you.

FARRANT *has returned, and finds himself opposite*
MRS. O'CONNELL.

FARRANT. How's the headache?

AMY O'CONNELL. Oh, had I a headache? So I had. No one pitied me. That must have cured it.

FARRANT. Come and play one game of Pool. Good exercise. Come along, you two.

This last is to LUCY and WALTER. LADY JULIA'S eyebrows go up.

LADY JULIA. Dear George . . . at this hour!

LUCY DAVENPORT. I'll play.

LADY JULIA. Send Mr. Trebell in to us. He won't, I'm sure.

FARRANT. He said he'd a brief to look through. Shocking Sabbath-breaking!

AMY O'CONNELL. What a wonderful moon!

The suggestion of Pool has shifted AMY O'CONNELL and LUCY from their chairs; and AMY is standing half in, half out of one of the windows. LADY JULIA can ask her husband just a little more confidentially . . .

LADY JULIA. Did he and the dear departed . . . ?

FARRANT. Who's that? Oh, Blackborough.

LADY JULIA. Did they get on any sort of terms, d'you think?

FARRANT. I daresay. There's often more gained by not talking about a thing than just by talking.

LADY JULIA. We really ought to have got one step further.

FARRANT. Don't scold me. . . . I did my devil-

most. Why didn't you ask his Eminence Charles Cantilupe down? Then we'd have had Disestablishment hot for breakfast and cold for lunch . . . and Disestablishment nicely warmed up again for dinner.

LADY JULIA. Yes . . . just what we didn't want at this juncture.

FARRANT. Oh! Sorry I'm not subtle. [*Grumbling contentedly.*] I'm sick of politics. Nothing but a safe seat and devotion to my country . . .

LUCY DAVENPORT. Why don't you take a peerage, Cousin George?

FARRANT. I'd love it. Julia won't let me.

FRANCES TREBELL. Oh . . . why not?

FARRANT. Julia, the daughter of a hundred earls . . . Julia, the wife of a pinchbeck modern peer! No, no! She married me for my money . . . and I must keep in my place.

LADY JULIA. George . . . your humour is old-fashioned. Run away.

The two of them must be very happy together if he can joke with the truth like that. He turns towards the window. MRS. O'CONNELL is standing right out in the moonlight now, but when he speaks to her she frames herself in the window again to answer him.

FARRANT. Come and take a cue, dear lady.

AMY O'CONNELL. Kind gentleman . . . did you never remark that I have a pointed elbow?

FARRANT. [*who is perhaps not quite so simple as he seems.*] No . . . have you?

AMY O'CONNELL. If I took a cue, you would. My headache's back . . . and the moon's very good for it. I shall stroll once round the fountain. And so to bed, Julia?

LADY JULIA. Yes . . . biscuits are by the billiard-room. We'll pick you up there.

AMY O'CONNELL. I may be rude and not wait for you.

*She vanishes into the moonlight and the garden.
FARRANT departs. LUCY and WALTER are about to
follow him.*

LADY JULIA. Oh dear, oh dear! I'm growing old . . . I'm growing clumsy. Here's the week-end over . . . and nothing has happened. And I thought I'd made up the mixture so nicely too. Lucy! Take Amy O'Connell her lace . . . or she'll catch a cold next. -

*LUCY returns and picks up the lace scarf as if, it
would seem, she had a certain contempt for it.*

LUCY DAVENPORT. Colds are unbecoming.

LADY JULIA. Lucy!

LUCY DAVENPORT. Sorry! My claws need cutting. Here, Walter . . . you take it. Be gallant. You're forgetting how . . . hob-nobbing with me.

WALTER KENT. That's your fault.

*There is a happy, triumphant confidence in his
voice which can have nothing to do, surely, with
what he says. He goes after MRS. O'CONNELL and
LUCY after her Cousin George. The three women
left together settle at once into cosier friendliness.*

LADY MORTIMER. Are those two young people engaged or are they not, Julia?

LADY JULIA. No . . . but they settled when they were children that neither of them would ever marry anybody else. They haven't twopence. He thinks he ought to go into the City for a few years. She won't have that . . . he's to start for a career straight away. She's to have babies . . . two boys and a girl, she tells me.

LADY MORTIMER. Science is so accommodating nowadays.

LADY JULIA. She has the brains really . . . but he wants to please her. He'll be somebody before she has done.

LADY MORTIMER. It was good of your Henry to give him such a chance.

FRANCES TREBELL. My Henry wanted to please. And likes Walter. He doesn't like many people.

LADY JULIA. Your Henry has been very naughty this week-end.

FRANCES TREBELL. Julia, I did warn you . . . you may be wasting your time.

LADY MORTIMER. Julia . . . if a brutal question is permissible : What are you up to ?

LADY JULIA. I hoped it was obvious. The successful intriguer, mamma, does nothing underhand. If Cyril Horsham forms a Cabinet, Mr. Trebell must be in it.

LADY MORTIMER. But he doesn't belong to your Party.

LADY JULIA. He doesn't belong to any other. He sits as an Independent . . . Ellesmere's his pocket borough. He always has got in as an Independent, hasn't he, Frances ?

FRANCES TREBELL. During the war . . .

LADY JULIA. Oh, that doesn't count. And I want him to have charge of the Disestablishment Bill.

LADY MORTIMER. That'll be a bold stroke.

LADY JULIA. It's high time we made one . . . if we're not to be Blackboroughed to death.

LADY MORTIMER. But won't it be Cyril's own affair ?

LADY JULIA. He can't . . . he must take the Foreign Office. Do you mean to tell me, Frances, that if Henry's made the offer point-blank, he'll say no ?

FRANCES TREBELL. I think it quite likely.

LADY JULIA. But what is he in public life for at all, then ? He can't stay in the House and make speeches that count . . . count for votes ! . . . and always refuse office. It's not right. He needn't join the Party even. Disestablishment is an exceptional thing . . . there'll be a lot of cross voting.

LADY MORTIMER. But sanctified by office, he might stay in it, you think?

LADY JULIA. [*countering her mother with perfect frankness.*] Yes . . . I hope. Practical politics are Party politics. And we'd be the better off for him. Can't you use your influence, Frances?

FRANCES TREBELL. Julia . . . though such a thing must seem to you against nature . . . I have no influence with Henry . . . and never have had, from the days when we played in our suburban nursery together.

LADY JULIA. But what does he want of life? He doesn't like society . . .

FRANCES TREBELL. No.

LADY JULIA. He dislikes women, apparently.

FRANCES TREBELL. He's pretty indifferent to them.

LADY JULIA. He can't suspect me of wanting to flirt with him, I hope. But whenever I try to talk to him the temperature drops.

LADY MORTIMER. He flattered an old lady at tea-time yesterday with some very pleasant attentions.

LADY JULIA. He considers you safe, mamma.

LADY MORTIMER. Then he has no right to. Mine is the perfect age for a love affair.

LADY JULIA. How old is he, Frances?

FRANCES TREBELL. Fifty-one.

LADY JULIA. Well . . . he has made himself a unique position. If it's going to be a barren one . . . what a pity! And here's a chance of the premiership for him . . . nothing less in the end. Isn't that good enough? If you can't do better with him, Frances . . . marry him off to some vulgar ambitious woman who will.

FRANCES TREBELL. I think I have never really known what Henry believed in. We all disbelieve in so much . . . and believe in so little nowadays.

The BUTLER comes in.

THE BUTLER. Dr. Wedgecroft has telephoned, my

lady. His thanks . . . they stopped the express for him and he reached town in good time.

LADY JULIA. Thank you.

The BUTLER goes.

LADY MORTIMER. Was he sent for ?

LADY JULIA. No . . . it's his point of honour not to sleep out of town during what he calls his duty months.

FRANCES TREBELL. Gilbert can do as much with Henry as any one.

LADY JULIA. I know. That's why I fetched him down to-day. They had a talk before dinner. Bed, mamma ?

LADY MORTIMER. I think so.

LADY JULIA. I must go by the billiard-room. Is our lovely Amy still star-gazing ? Mr. Blackborough didn't seem to be so very "took" with her.

LADY MORTIMER. He eyed her as if he thought she'd try to borrow money from him.

FRANCES TREBELL. I don't see her.

The suggestion of bed has brought them to their feet ;

LADY MORTIMER is collecting her spectacles and such-like ; FRANCES has moved out into the courtyard, she now comes back.

LADY JULIA. I only asked her in the hope that she'd amuse him.

FRANCES TREBELL. Julia . . . how brutal !

LADY JULIA. People must expect to be made use of. She sets out to be amusing . . . to men. A house-party needs just a dash of . . . her sort of thing.

LADY MORTIMER. Your cunning is too consistent, Julia. You really should do something single-minded occasionally. Why, by the way, did you ask me ?

LADY JULIA. I love you, mamma.

LADY MORTIMER. That may be your salvation yet.

LADY JULIA. But the lovely Amy bores me. I wonder you like her so, Frances.

FRANCES TREBELL. I like all sorts of people.

LADY JULIA. Why doesn't she go back to her Justin ?

FRANCES TREBELL. He's impossible.

LADY JULIA. I doubt it.

FRANCES TREBELL. My dear . . . with a housemaid for his mistress . . . even an Irish housemaid !

LADY JULIA. She could give her a month's notice.

LADY MORTIMER. And this is the result of bringing up my daughter upon the novels of Miss Charlotte M. Yonge !

FRANCES TREBELL. But for all Amy's airs and graces one feels sorry for her at times. There's something of the waif about her.

LADY MORTIMER. Good-night, dear Miss Trebell.

FRANCES TREBELL. Good-night.

LADY JULIA. I'll come in and kiss you, mamma. And I will not sit up watching Lucy play Pool . . .

And so they talk themselves out of the room.

It must be an hour later, or nearly, for the moon has sunk behind the little wooded hills which bound the gardens. The room is empty. Some thrifty hand has turned out a light or two. In the courtyard there appear AMY O'CONNELL and HENRY TREBELL. The lace scarf that WALTER took her is wrapped round her head and shoulders : she looks nun-like. They pause outside the window.

AMY. There goes the moon . . . so there goes romance ! I'm cold. Doesn't moonshine warm the night just a little ?

TREBELL. No.

AMY. Sure ?

TREBELL. Quite.

AMY. I like to think it does.

She comes into the room ; he follows her. We are all built up on contradictions ; hence our equilibrium.

But with most of us the opposing qualities are fused in compromise. What one remarks in TREBELL is that with him this is not so. The idealist and the cynic, the sensualist and the ascetic, gentleness and cruelty, could any one of them have undisputed sway if he'd let them. But not the least remarkable thing about him is the rigid control which some inner man seems to exercise over this outer man, yet with indifference, almost with disdain. At this moment, however, he is flirting with a pretty woman. He flirts a little grimly. There is something, one would say, cat-like about MRS. O'CONNELL, and one might compare her flirting—the metaphor is none the worse for being old—to the cat playing with its mouse. But a tiger is playing with her.

AMY. Every one in bed ?

TREBELL. The billiard-room lights are out.

AMY. How rude of Julia ! What's the time ?

TREBELL. Twenty past twelve.

AMY. [*happily horror-struck.*] Never ! Then how dare you keep me gallivanting in the garden all this while ? No one told you I was down there ?

TREBELL. No.

AMY. That's as well.

TREBELL. They thought you'd carried your headache to bed. . . .

AMY. I hope.

TREBELL. I went off to finish some work. I slipped out for a breath of air . . . and took a bee-line to you.

AMY. In the dark !

TREBELL. By instinct.

AMY. Well, good-night.

TREBELL. Good-night.

* *She gives him her hand, which he holds a moment longer than he need.*

AMY. But you've been dodging me this whole week-end . . . publicly.

TREBELL. I have been dodging you . . . privately . . . for these last six months.

AMY. Then . . . let me tell you . . . you began to dodge long before there was any need.

TREBELL. I felt the need.

AMY. Thank you. I'm such a siren, am I . . . *malgré moi*? I'll see there's no more need. How long since we first met?

TREBELL. I fear I forget.

AMY. It's a year or more. I disliked you then exceedingly.

TREBELL. I make no complaint of that.

AMY. Last January I began to like you a little . . . and for one whole evening I thought you liked me. After that I disliked you till about April . . . then for a week or two I liked you a lot. But I think I'd better finish by disliking you.

TREBELL. Perhaps you had.

AMY. Have you any friends?

TREBELL. Only old friends.

AMY. You'll chaff and flatter and gibe at me for an hour. But you don't like me . . . so why not say so? Good-night.

She is close to him. Without preliminaries, he seizes her and kisses her, full on the lips. Having done so he releases her as suddenly. She stands there, a challenger, whose challenge has been accepted. But there is to be manœuvring yet.

AMY. And you'll do that! I might have known.

TREBELL. Didn't you?

AMY. One has to risk it.

TREBELL. I've not kissed a woman for ten years . . . just about.

AMY. [*pursing her numbed lips prettily.*] Go I should suppose!

TREBELL. I apologise. No, I don't. You knew that I'd kiss you.

AMY. Really! Which is the worst? The kiss . . . or the apology . . . or that? I wonder if I could be as brutal as you, Henry. Shall I try?

TREBELL. Do try.

AMY. If you meant to . . . why didn't you . . . before? It was wonderful there by the fountain. I'll confess, when we turned down by the yew trees . . . I did think you would.

TREBELL. No! I've no use for romance in the moonlight. Nor any time . . . nor taste for semi-intellectual flirtations. You're quite right . . . you'd better keep away from me.

AMY. What has made you so afraid of women? Did some selfish creature try to marry you? I wonder any man gets married. Why should he? But I rather wonder you weren't married young . . . and married wrong. Almost any woman could have married you . . . if she'd put her mind to it.

TREBELL. I was engaged for a year or more when I was twenty-two. For I was a nice young man. . . .

AMY. Never!

TREBELL. By bringing up . . . by habit . . . head-ing for domesticity. Yes . . . and it was by moonlight in a garden I proposed.

AMY. Such an indelicate word, I always think! Did she jilt you, the silly? Did you suffer?

TREBELL. No . . . I broke it off . . . I had the pluck to.

AMY. Why?

TREBELL. I never can want to see things but just starkly as they are. She was a nice young woman through and through . . . and full of sentiments that she thought were feelings and of shop-soiled ideas. Incurably

suburban and incurably unreal. And she wasn't for babies and housekeeping. We were to be lifelong companions in culture. I should have broken her heart. She never married. Frances keeps in touch with her. She settled in Surrey . . . has a garden . . . and belongs to the Labour Party. Later . . . if this interests you . . .

AMY. But of course it interests me.

TREBELL. It ought not to . . . at the moment.

AMY. Why not?

TREBELL. The past has no place in love-making . . . nor the future.

AMY. Oh . . . are we love-making?

TREBELL. I'm waiting to begin again.

AMY. Then I'd better hear about your past . . . while there's still time.

TREBELL. It's not interesting. I had an affair . . . as they're called . . . with a woman, which worked out like the plot of a cheap novel. Really we might have been reading it up as we went . . . she and her husband and I. It must have been about their sixth volume. He'd been the first one's hero. Then he had to encourage successors . . . or the useless unhappy creature would have taken to drink or religion or something. I escaped. Good honest harlotry is more tolerable than that. No . . . thank you very much . . . no more hectic half-hours or moonlit moments for me.

AMY. But has no woman ever made you suffer? Not that you'd tell me!

TREBELL. I daresay I shouldn't.

AMY. Never a heartache?

TREBELL. When you talk of stomachache I know what you mean. When you talk of heartache . . . I'm not so sure you do!

AMY. I do not talk of stomachaches . . . and I never have one.

TREBELL. Lucky woman !

AMY. There's no luck in it . . . I'm particular about my food. But I wonder if I couldn't make you suffer . . . just a little.

TREBELL. I doubt it.

AMY. You'd come to thank me. All that is best in my character I owe to unhappiness.

TREBELL. This is where I kiss you again.

AMY. Thank you for the warning. It's where you don't.

TREBELL. Silly talk of some sort seems a necessary prelude . . . though I never could make out why. I've obliged with my share . . . I hoped we were through with it. But do let us avoid cant !

AMY. Henry . . . you're right . . . I'd better have done with you. You're a cold-blooded brute. . . .

TREBELL. Far from it.

AMY. Well . . . you've given what you'd call your heart, then, to politics and the law. I daresay you're quite sentimental about tariffs and the gold standard. But wherever should I come in? Join the Tories and let Julia patronise you. You'll find that frightfully thrilling. I wish I'd never begun to like you. Heavens . . . you must be horrid to live with! Poor Frances !

TREBELL. She has not been complaining, I hope.

AMY. Not she ! I love Frances.

TREBELL. I constantly hear you say so.

AMY. And she adores you.

TREBELL. With the subtlety of vanity I divined what you and she had in common.

AMY. I wish I thought you were vain. There'd be that much humanity about you.

TREBELL. The very first time I saw you . . . you were sitting on the sofa by the fireplace in Berkeley Street . . . Frances was giving you tea . . . there were three

or four other women there. You wore a pink dress with frills to it . . .

AMY. Lilac!! Heavens . . . I never wore pink in my life!

TREBELL. It was pink to me! And when you arched your instep . . . it's a trick you have . . . I could hear the stocking rustle.

AMY. I'd forgotten you were there. I'm so glad I'd forgotten.

TREBELL. If I'd followed my instinct then I should have sat down and made love to you before them all . . . which wouldn't quite have done.

AMY. And since then you've had so much else to do!

TREBELL. My day's work's pretty dull. I've grown so used to doing it.

AMY. Such brilliant speeches to make!

TREBELL. I've grown so used to making 'em. No . . . I rather regretted then that the temptation of you wasn't overwhelming. But we have our wintry seasons . . . long ones, often!

AMY. I don't want to tempt you. Yes, I do. But you don't look one bit . . . even now . . . as if you were in love with me. Yes, you do . . . yes, you do. But you've not said you love me. Why don't you say so?

TREBELL. I'll say whatever's necessary.

AMY. Don't gibe! I hate you when you gibe. Not even asked me if I love you!

TREBELL. Don't you? Do you? Don't you?

AMY. We don't mean the same thing by it, I'm afraid.

TREBELL. It comes to the same thing.

AMY. Henry . . . you have a coarse mind! No . . . I'll have nothing to do with you.

TREBELL. Very well.

AMY. I won't be played with. Oh . . . it has

always been the same. I was petted and bullied as a child . . . one or the other or both at a time. Justin petted and spoiled and bullied me till he got sick of it . . . and I got sick of it and left him. I was very unhappy with Justin. Well . . . I made him unhappy, I suppose.

TREBELL. Still, he was able in the intervals to write two books that count on Plantagenet Charters.

AMY. Do they? I'm sure I'm very glad. I suppose it would be kinder now to divorce him. But I can't make up my mind to . . . for we're Catholics . . . and I haven't any money of my own. And whatever I did he'd never divorce me.

TREBELL. Well . . . that gives you scope.

AMY. Oh no, no . . . you don't take me seriously! I'm good for something more than to be treated like this. And I will be!

They have been sitting together on the sofa, close together. But all this time he has not even touched her hand. Now, though, he takes her in his arms and begins to kiss her, not once but again and again, not hastily either.

TREBELL. This is how I take you . . . seriously . . . very seriously. Isn't this serious enough?

She gasps, half ecstatic, or a little frightened.

AMY. Let me get my breath.

TREBELL. No, I won't.

He holds her still, and still kisses her.

Isn't this good enough . . . almost?

He half releases her at last. If he quite let her go she would fall.

Say something.

AMY. [*softly.*] I've nothing to say.

TREBELL. Kiss me.

She is lifting her lips obediently when she hears footsteps.

AMY. Good heavens . . . somebody's coming.

TREBELL. One of the servants. Sit still.

AMY. No, no . . . he'll notice . . . ! Oh, what a fool . . . to be caught . . . !

She has vanished through the window. TREBELL is sitting at his ease as the BUTLER comes in, evidently to close the room. This promises a dilemma. As TREBELL does not move, after a moment the BUTLER asks discreetly . . .

THE BUTLER. You're sitting up, sir ?

TREBELL. No . . . I've just been for a walk . . . round the ponds . . . I didn't know it was so late. The house looks its best by moonlight.

THE BUTLER. Yes, sir . . . the Inigo Jones wing especially . . . so it's considered.

TREBELL. It is Inigo Jones ?

THE BUTLER. Most houses that can like to call themselves that . . . but there's his accounts for the work in the library. I have the drawing-rooms to see closed yet, sir.

He is on his way out by the other door.

TREBELL. Oh . . . what about trains in the morning ?

THE BUTLER. There's the 8.45 . . . the 9.30's a slow . . . and a 10.15.

TREBELL. What time in town ?

THE BUTLER. Ten past eleven.

TREBELL. I must take the early one. I don't want breakfast. A cup of coffee.

THE BUTLER. Very good, sir.

The BUTLER departs. TREBELL, after two seconds' assurance that he has departed, goes up to the window.

TREBELL. All clear !

AMY slips back through the window, and is making a bee-line for the door when he catches her hand.

*She is tremulous, but too stirred to be frightened.
She tugs, though.*

AMY. Good-night . . . good-night !

TREBELL. No.

AMY. My darling . . . good-night.

TREBELL. Not at all.

AMY. Henry . . . let me go.

TREBELL. Your room's the last on the left ?

She gasps.

AMY. Oh no ! No . . . it isn't.

TREBELL. Never mind . . . there are cards on the doors . . . most sensible custom !

AMY. No, no . . . oh, for heaven's sake, no ! Not here !

TREBELL. Why ever not ?

AMY. Not to-night, though . . . Henry . . . please !

TREBELL. We may both be dead by to-morrow. I'll wait half an hour.

AMY. Don't make me ashamed. Let's be patient a little. That'll make it more beautiful. I promise . . . I promise you . . . very soon.

TREBELL. I can't stop you turning your key.

AMY. Then you'll say I'm heartless. Is he coming back ?

TREBELL. Yes.

The advent of the BUTLER whips her share of the dispute to a small frenzy. He holds her still, but if she struggled a little harder, surely she could break away. It is not his hand's grip that holds her, distracted, possessed, pathetic.

AMY. . . . and I'm not. No, nor patient . . . in my heart. I love you . . . it hurts me to love you so. Yours . . . all of me . . . whenever . . . whenever . . . ! Oh, I can't stop here arguing !

With which sudden break into the commonplace and almost with a stamp of the foot she breaks free and

vanishes. He is finding a book to take up to bed with him when the BUTLER returns one moment later.

TREBELL. Good-night.

THE BUTLER. Good-night, sir.

TREBELL goes off with his book. The BUTLER starts to close the room.

ACT II

TREBELL *has just moved into a fresh working room in his house in Berkeley Street, though FRANCES, to be sure, did the moving. The room shows new, but not aggressively. It shows also in its white paint, its plain beige walls, its barely curtained windows, its sparseness of ornament, his taste (and hers) for simplicity in such matters, above all, for plentiful light by which to work. You can read a book in any corner of it.*

The two long windows on your left throw their light well across the room. Facing you is a double door; when this is opened another door is seen across the landing (we are on the first floor); and when this is opened you can see a writing-table with its furnishings. And the walls of this smaller room, which is, so to speak, an under-study, are lined with bookcases filled with law reports and such-like. Between the two rooms a window throws light on the landing and up and down the staircase. In TREBELL'S room the bookcases are low, they run all round it, and the books are of every sort and kind. On one side of the bright fire, which is on your right, there is an arm-chair. On the other a chaise-longue sticks out, and by each are tables piled with books. There is yet another table with newspapers ranged on it in order. And, standing out in the room is a very large writing-table, covered — besides its proper belongings, its big ink-stand, its telephone — with books, blue-books, pamphlets

and a hundred letters or so, opened and unopened, neatly placed in packets, elastic-banded. And at the table sits TREBELL himself, surveying the work he has evidently just come back to, and beginning to nibble at it. FRANCES looks in on him. She is dressed to go out ; by the look of her dress it is a fine autumn morning.

FRANCES. Henry . . . I'm off now. I've ordered lunch for you. There's enough for two if you want to feed Walter.

TREBELL. I've given him this morning to spend with his beloved. But I do wish that nice young man hadn't settled to marry just as this job was starting. And he didn't tell me till the ship was half-way to Naples . . . or I'd never have taken him the jaunt.

FRANCES. Lucy made him go.

TREBELL. I wish they were married, then, and had got their romancing over.

FRANCES. You're their romance.

TREBELL. Heaven help me !

FRANCES. And your job. It's a big job.

TREBELL. It has the makings of a job in it.

FRANCES. Is this room all right ? The paint still smells a bit. I had to put Hansard and the big dictionaries and most of the books from the Temple in there.

TREBELL. I admire my waste-paper basket [*which is, indeed, magnificently capacious*]

FRANCES. The statesman's companion. Everything has been answered that could be. There are the press-cuttings. You do look the sounder for six weeks Italy.

TREBELL. That stretch east of Rome that nobody ever sees is worth seeing. I escaped the election babel anyhow. Thank heaven I didn't have to fight.

FRANCES. It was a near thing, though, they didn't run that Labour man against you.

TREBELL. But when the car broke something . . . which it did most days . . . Kent and I would climb up out of the dust and sit making up fifteenth-century campaigning speeches to the citizens of Cassino or Lanciano or Bovino or wherever it was we ought to have been getting to while Giacomo Giuseppe Giusti tied it up again with bits of string.

FRANCES. It rained hard here all September. This month has been beautiful so far.

TREBELL. How long did you stay at Winfield?

FRANCES. Till Mary was up again.

TREBELL. A boy or a girl? You did tell me.

FRANCES. Another girl.

TREBELL. A dull holiday for you.

FRANCES. No . . . I'm not sure I wasn't meant to live in a Dorset rectory.

TREBELL. Sorry I took the wrong turning. The thing to remember about the Renaissance Italian is that he was a realist . . . a financier . . . a passionate politician . . . who took beauty and art and literature and the rest in his stride. An immoral fellow . . . Hullo!

This last is to WALTER KENT, who has just bounded up the stairs, glanced into the little room, which is his own, and now turns into this. He is in fine trim, and happy beyond words: not so much at being on the threshold of his own career as in his share of his hero's.

WALTER KENT. I got Lord Charles on the telephone. He'd rather come and see you. He said eleven-thirty.

TREBELL. That'll do.

WALTER KENT. I'd better begin on these.

He takes a packet or so of the already opened letters from the table.

TREBELL. ♣What about Wedgecroft?

WALTER KENT. He's here.

TREBELL. I gave you the morning off, you know.

WALTER KENT. I know.

WALTER carries his letters into his room. FRANCES stands watching him, affectionately amused; time was when she dashed at work like that. He does not deliberately ignore her, of course; they have evidently met before this morning. A maid now announces "DR. WEDGECROFT," whom FRANCES turns to greet. WEDGECROFT is a man of TREBELL's age, if to outward appearance rather older, but alert in body and mind; a born healer, his bedside manner real and not assumed; one discerns an intellectual ruthlessness in him too.

WEDGECROFT. How are you?

FRANCES. You need never ask.

WEDGECROFT. You wait! Once I start physicking you . . . ! Have you come back ill?

He has passed on to TREBELL. Not having met for months, they are yet too close friends for any hand-shaking.

TREBELL. No.

WEDGECROFT. Then how dare you drag me from Wimpole Street?

TREBELL. I've a better use for you. Give me five minutes.

FRANCES is departing. WALTER comes to the door of his room. WEDGECROFT goes up for a word with him. TREBELL has not moved from his table.

FRANCES. In to dinner, Henry?

TREBELL. Yes . . . no . . . I don't know.

FRANCES. I'll ask Julia . . . if she's doing nothing . . . and your young lady [*this to WALTER*]. You'll be here . . . let me tell you . . . till midnight.

WEDGECROFT. How long have I to decide between a set of fish-knives and a sugar-sifter?

WALTER KENT. I should start to think about it.

FRANCES. Oh . . . and, Walter, if Amy O'Connell rings up. . . . No . . . never mind. I'll leave a message downstairs. She asked us to Charles Street . . . vaguely. Whatever time she wakes in the morning . . . !

FRANCES *is already half-way downstairs.* WALTER *goes back into his room.* WEDGECROFT *returns to TREBELL, and the two are at ease for their talk.* TREBELL *looks at the other a little quizzically as if he expected WEDGECROFT to have something to say to him—and he has.*

TREBELL. Well ?

WEDGECROFT. Henry . . . I consider you owe me an apology.

TREBELL. Do you ?

WEDGECROFT. When did you settle this ?

TREBELL. With Horsham . . . definitely ? . . . though, of course, it can't be definite till he is sent for. Ten days before I left.

WEDGECROFT. And just about three weeks before that I was walking you round the garden at Shapters . . . persuading you . . .

TREBELL. The good Lady Julia having set you on.

WEDGECROFT. And you quite persuaded me that you'd be wrong to.

TREBELL. Did I ? What excellent arguments did I use ?

WEDGECROFT. You said you were no Tory. . . .

TREBELL. Notoriously no Tory !

WEDGECROFT. Psychologists declare the punning habit to be a sign of failing intellect.

TREBELL. They're wrong. The passionate pun is a feature of great literature. But I'm not a Liberal, am I ? ●

WEDGECROFT. I have never accused you of altruism.

TREBELL. I might join the Liberals . . . if I were twenty.

WEDGECROFT. You said you'd made Labour loathe you by ten years' damning of the Trades Unions. . . .

TREBELL. And I've been right! Look at their candidates this last election. Good God . . . a feudal system working from the bottom up! Who wants that?

WEDGECROFT. So you could be no help to Horsham there.

TREBELL. Oh . . . the Labour front bench loves to hear me damning the Unions. They look down their noses like pleased pussy-cats. They daren't do it themselves.

WEDGECROFT. What made you change your mind?

TREBELL. That's my secret. Have you been seeing Horsham?

WEDGECROFT. Once or twice. He's been at Lympe . . . pretty tired out.

TREBELL. These present fellows mean to meet Parliament . . .

WEDGECROFT. Apparently.

TREBELL. He'll have to beat 'em on the Address.

WEDGECROFT. You won't be in office till mid-November.

TREBELL. I'm not in all that hurry. It's a simple secret, Gilbert. I found I'd fallen in love. No . . . not with a woman, you old sentimentalist! With this job. I am in love with a Bill for the Disestablishment of the Church of England . . . and for doing sundry other more interesting things. And I mean to make an honest Act of Parliament of the little darling. I'm as joyful . . . as that lad is in there at his prospect of answering my letters for a year or two. But I don't show it.

WEDGECROFT. Don't you . . . my innocent!

TREBELL. Do I? Well, I don't care if I do.

WEDGECROFT. I'm glad . . . I'm damned glad. I'd begun to wonder about you. I seem to have watched so many rivers run into the sand.

TREBELL. Men get what they want in this world mostly. The hard thing is to want it . . . and to keep on wanting it . . . and to want nothing else. I thought the law altogether lovely once . . . till I learned to make twelve thousand a year out of it. I went into the House quite hopefully. But my only choice there came to be between gibing at the fools and becoming one of them.

WEDGECROFT. Now, now . . . are they all fools?

TREBELL. There are the worse than fools . . . that see the facts and shirk them. Do our bodies ever come to disbelieve in life?

WEDGECROFT. Sometimes.

TREBELL. Then you've soon done with them?

WEDGECROFT. Not always.

TREBELL. Better to be. From barrenness of mind and emptiness of will, at any rate, I'd pray . . . if I knew how to pray . . . for death to deliver me. But we cling on . . . and sometimes life delivers us. Most men's temptation, I suppose, is to make for success . . . to learn the official creed of what we do not believe . . . to attune themselves to the mob mind . . . till they have earned their place among the parasites upon power that call themselves governments to-day. It's not so hard a path . . . to the dead end of success. But I wasn't tempted. I'm not built that way.

WEDGECROFT. And what's to be the difference now?

TREBELL. You'll see. I hope you'll see.

WEDGECROFT. Horsham's doing a plucky thing, Henry. What will the real old Tories make of you?

TREBELL. Oh, they'd kick . . . if they'd the spirit of their own sheep.

WEDGECROFT. And the rest of the crew? Blackborough?

TREBELL. I'm not afraid of him.

WEDGECROFT. He'll be at the Treasury ?

TREBELL. I hope not. He and his ca' canny business kind . . . they've no right in a government at all . . . they're as bad as the Trades Unions every bit. Black-borough's a getter . . . not a giver.

WEDGECROFT. Cut out for the Treasury, then . . . he may think. He doesn't love you.

TREBELL. I daresay not.

WEDGECROFT. There's a Cabinet sweepstake at the Club. I drew Farrant.

TREBELL. Oh . . . he'll be in. Nice fellow. No good, of course. Agriculture, probably.

WEDGECROFT. I sold him for a fiver.

TREBELL. There'll have to be a fair lot of fresh men. Walter and I sat in the Galleria at Milan last Thursday drinking chocolate and trying to make a list. Yes . . . I can pull this Bill through the House . . . I can face the public . . . I can stand up to the Press ! But the thought of one's colleagues keeps one awake at nights. I want Cantilupe in.

WEDGECROFT. Good heavens . . . no !

TREBELL. Why not ?

WEDGECROFT. My dear Henry ! His Eminence . . . with every incense-swinger in England at his back . . . in a Cabinet . . . that's to disestablish the Church !

TREBELL. He has come round to it.

WEDGECROFT. Even so . . . will Broad Church and Low Church and pretty-nearly-no-Church stomach his official finger in the pie ?

TREBELL. They're to be bought. Endow their good works department. The mammon of righteousness !

WEDGECROFT. And the Bishops ?

TREBELL. I can deal with the Bishops. A bishop's a man of business. He has to be . . . and it's all he has much chance to be But there's life in Cantilupe and

his lot. They believe in something bigger than the multiplication table. So do I . . . though they don't give me credit for it. I can get something out of them.

WEDGECROFT. But, Henry . . . from your own standpoint . . . when you've done this job . . . and it's going to be the devil of a job . . . what's to happen then?

TREBELL. What do you see happening then?

WEDGECROFT. Why is it offered you?

TREBELL *up to now has been shrewd, amused, reflective. This rouses in him a certain dialectical pugnacity.*

TREBELL. Because they've not a man among them that doesn't funk it. Why must democracy grow us these crops of political cowards? Two governments have shirked the thing. . . . Horsham would shirk it now if he could . . . though it has been plain these ten years that something drastic must be done . . . ever since the Jackson case . . . ever since the Anglo-Catholics began to keep out non-communicants. And what has been done? The Liberals meet at Manchester and cry: Down with Dogma . . . Free Trade in Religion for ever . . . Take the endowments to pay off the War Debt . . . !

WEDGECROFT. Now, now . . . be fair.

TREBELL. Never be fair to your opponents . . . it wastes time. All Labour can think of is: Pity the poor pew-opener . . . double her old-age pension. I talk some sense on the subject. So Horsham turns to me . . . and I may make any sort of a settlement that will save him thinking of the thing again. And then Blackborough and his back-scratching friends will pick a quarrel with me . . . and out I may go into the wilderness with whatever odium's in the Act when it's working on my back.

WEDGECROFT. Well . . . as long as you foresee that part of the programme too !

TREBELL. That part mayn't come off, though.

WEDGECROFT. Oh, they'll be glad enough to turn you Tory. Dear Lady Julia will take you gently in hand . . . to add you to the list of reformers she has reformed.

TREBELL. I know ! Damn all these women. Though she has brains . . . of the ornamental sort. I don't think, though, she has been good for Horsham. These spiritual adulteries debilitate the mind. She'd better have been his mistress for a year or two and have done with it.

WEDGECROFT. But I do not see you leavening the Tory lump.

TREBELL. Gilbert . . . when you fall in love don't look too far ahead. Let your faith have its will of you. Here's a problem in high politics . . . the first for how long that has not been mere bread-and-butter business . . . set me to solve. I'm in love with solving it. And my creed is belief in the thing done . . . well and truly done as a means to the next. Not in the thing shirked . . . in this fashionable fog of goodwill . . . this power, not ourselves, that makes for statesmanship. I believe if I dare do this job ruthlessly . . . for its own sake . . . I can make the thing done a living thing . . . a hopeful thing. And with a few more such for a sign this dazed generation might pluck up and face the future again. And I'll face a soft old age. But look here . . . this is what I want you for. How about Brampton ?

WEDGECROFT. I'm on my way round there.

TREBELL. I thought you might be. How ill is he ?

WEDGECROFT. He's seventy-four.

TREBELL. What's that nowadays ? Is he really ill . . . is he going to die ?

WEDGE CROFT. Sir . . . I am attending him.

TREBELL. And why the devil do you let him get ill just now? Is he too ill to look through my figures? Horsham says he has had them three weeks.

At this moment the table telephone rings. TREBELL mechanically puts the receiver to his ear, and holds it there while the talk goes on. But he receives nothing apparently.

WEDGE CROFT. He has been ill enough to do nothing he didn't want to do.

TREBELL. [*to the telephone.*] Hullo? Yes? Hullo? Won't he stomach me as a colleague? Is that what's the matter with him?

WEDGE CROFT. Professional etiquette forbids me to disclose what a patient may confess in the sweat of his agony. But you may take it his stomach is sound.

WALTER KENT comes in and, seeing his chief clinging to the receiver, says, cheerfully . . .

WALTER KENT. Sorry . . . I wasn't sure if it worked.

TREBELL. You and your new toy! Cantilupe?

WALTER KENT. No. This from Mr. Horsham. And Mrs. O'Connell's downstairs. Miss Trebell's out. Are you both dining with her in Charles Street or not?

TREBELL opens the large envelope and goes through its contents as he talks.

TREBELL. I haven't the remotest idea. I shall work here till eight. Then I shall go where I'm taken . . . till ten.

WALTER KENT. I could telephone to Lady Julia's . . . Miss Trebell may be there.

He goes back to his room to do so.

WEDGE CROFT. Does Horsham expect to bring the old man in?

TREBELL. I want him at the Treasury.

WEDGE CROFT. In Blackborough's place?

TREBELL. It isn't Blackborough's place.

WEDGECROFT. You want all the troublesome fellows.

TREBELL. I want all the first-rate fellows. These are my figures . . . sent back through Horsham. He has not made a note on them. What the devil's he up to ?

WEDGECROFT. I can tell you a bit of his mind. He knew I should see you . . . I fancy he meant me to. He detests this political generation. He thinks you're mad . . . but he rather admires you. He'll come back, he says, if he comes back at all, to knock your finance into shape and some of the nonsense out of you. But for you, he thinks, Horsham's not got a man who won't muddle the job anyhow. So why the blankety blank blank . . . but for you . . . shouldn't he make ready to meet his God in peace ?

TREBELL. Good . . . !

During this MRS. O'CONNELL has come quietly up the stairs to stand, smiling and composed, on the landing. At this point they turn to see her.

AMY O'CONNELL. Oh . . . this is your room now ? And I'm interrupting . . . I'm so sorry. Where's the drawing-room, then ? And how are you ? Had a good holiday ? Not being physicked ? How are you, dear Dr. Wedgecroft ? Do you and Frances dine with me ? Nothing's ordered now . . . so you can't. Why doesn't she answer my messages ?

Still smiling, still composed—is she a little too composed ?—she has come into the room for these greetings and questions. TREBELL is familiarly polite.

TREBELL. Kent is telephoning to Frances. I'm very well, thank you. The new drawing-room is downstairs. I've had an excellent holiday. I think nothing of Gilbert as a doctor ; but his political intelligence . . . in both senses . . . I prize.

She is surveying the big writing-table now with mock-childish admiration.

AMY. What a tableful! If I sit here, shall I know what it feels like to be a great man?

WEDGECROFT. How is Ireland?

AMY. Beautiful always, isn't it? But sad!

WEDGECROFT. I used to feel sad there. But that was my bad British conscience. I'm off, Henry.

TREBELL joins him at the door, and MRS. O'CONNELL is left sitting at the table. She takes up a pencil and a bit of paper and begins to scribble idly.

TREBELL. The old man's my man . . . I don't mind what he thinks of me. He has forgotten more than I've ever learnt. He's got courage . . . he's got character. I'd sooner have him to fight than these political tradesmen to chaffer with. Get him out of bed . . . or give me half an hour with him and I'll get him out for you.

WALTER KENT has emerged from his room.

WALTER KENT. I'm sorry . . . Miss Trebell's not there.

AMY. Thank you ever so much . . . it doesn't matter in the least.

WALTER goes back again.

WEDGECROFT. Well . . . when the thermometer's in his mouth I'll say a word.

TREBELL. Thank you for coming . . . and always thank you.

Now, as upon impulse, the two do shake hands; and then WEDGECROFT, half in fun, slips professional fingers to his friend's wrist.

WEDGECROFT. I have backed you from the start. No, not for a place . . . you could have had that any time, I knew . . . but to win. Pulse . . . seventy. I'd prefer it a thought quicker.

TREBELL. Why?

WEDGECROFT. Good balance is good . . . but the power of recovery is better . . . and Nature likes us

to have a little practice in it now and then. I've never yet seen you thrilled or rattled.

MRS. O'CONNELL, *her scribbling over, has picked up from the table between finger and thumb what looks like a large flint stone, used as a paper weight evidently.*

AMY. Whatever is this, Henry?

TREBELL. I don't get rattled. I will at the next chance to please you. That? . . . won me my first seat . . . flung at me out of the first crowd I spoke to.

AMY. Did your head make this chip in it?

TREBELL. The fellow was a good shot. I wore a bandage for a month. I owed him five hundred votes by polling day. But he never let me thank him.

WEDGE CROFT *has gone. Beckoned by her voice TREBELL moves towards her, and a tapping finger tells him to read over her shoulder what she has scribbled on the scrap of paper. When he has read it he looks up to find WALTER KENT standing in the doorway as if waiting instructions.*

WALTER KENT. No answer to Mr. Horsham?

TREBELL. No.

The word has perhaps an odd ring in it ; but WALTER does not notice and goes downstairs to dismiss MR. HORSHAM'S messenger. TREBELL goes, not too quickly, to the door to shut it after him, while AMY O'CONNELL tears the scrap of paper into small bits, and throws them—a first sacrifice—into the so capacious waste-paper basket.

AMY. Don't shut the door. Yes . . . you'd better. *He does ; then faces her. Her mask drops off.*

TREBELL. What's wrong?

AMY. Why have you been away . . . these ages? I couldn't write. Come nearer to me. You'll hate me, Henry.

TREBELL. Trouble with your husband?

AMY. Not yet. No . . . I've not been near him. But you'd stopped loving me before you went away . . . after that one week. I knew. And you'll hate me now.

Her voice, too flat, too sharp, is hardly under her control. She is near the edge, indeed, of a nervous collapse.

TREBELL. My dear girl . . . if you've anything to tell me that won't wait, tell it quickly. We shall be interrupted . . . at any moment.

She tells him . . .

AMY. There's a danger of my having a child . . . your child . . . sometime in April. That's all.

TREBELL. In April?

AMY. The first week in April.

TREBELL. You're sure?

AMY. My God . . . d'you think I want it to be true? Say something.

He does not recognise, nor she, this echo of his own demand at a certain auspicious moment. But if he is silent, it is that his thoughts are racing.

TREBELL. When did you last . . . see your husband?

AMY. A year ago . . . and more.

TREBELL. Yes. We must consider.

His tones are dry. Her voice is dead.

AMY. I knew you'd hate me.

He is kindlier, but his mind is set neither to kindness nor unkindness.

TREBELL. Nonsense, my dear! You've had a hard month or so . . . with no one to talk to. I'm sorry.

AMY. I kept telling myself: It's not possible. Then . . . last Thursday week . . . I went to a doctor . . . down at Southampton . . . picked him out of the telephone book . . . gave him another name . . . told him I was off abroad. A kind old thing . . . said it was all quite satisfactory. But I've to keep telling myself

it's true . . . or I shouldn't believe it. Though when I wake at night . . . each time I wake, I'm saying : Yes, of course it's true . . . you've known it all along. How can things happen so . . . in spite of one ?

TREBELL. Yes . . . you've not been sleeping . . . I can see.

AMY. Kind of you to tell me . . . most consoling ! No, I've not been. I've taken stuff . . . all I dare . . . all I could get. You can't get much.

TREBELL. That won't do. You must be looked after.

AMY. Who's one to trust ? I nearly bolted when I saw Gilbert Wedgecroft. He stood there mum as a maggot. Heaven knows what these doctors can't tell just by glancing at you. Why did he ask me about Ireland ? Doesn't he know I never go back ?

TREBELL. Probably not. We could trust Gilbert.

AMY. I don't like him.

TREBELL. Why ?

AMY. Because he doesn't like me, I suppose. He's your friend . . . he'd think of what suited you. I won't have him told. Give me your word, please, you won't even hint things to him.

TREBELL. Very well.

They are at odds, hopelessly apart ; she querulous and distraught, he considerate, but incapable of soft phrase. Now, though, her voice rises in the mail of a lost child.

AMY. But what am I to do . . . what am I to do ?

TREBELL. There are half a hundred sensible things we can do . . . when you've steadied your nerves.

AMY. If only you still loved me a little it would help ! You think I've had lovers . . . besides you. It's not true . . . whoever has told it you. I've been near enough to the edge of it. I don't really like men . . . that's the silly thing. But you've to fool them . . . or they'll fool you. I did do one thing that

wasn't quite right before I was married . . . though nothing happened. Then Justin wasn't fair to me. He thinks a woman should sit at home and sew baby-clothes when she's not in church praying God to send her a use for them. Still . . . being a Catholic and confessing now and then does help keep you straight. Though you can't confess everything. And what do priests know about marriage anyway? They oughtn't to! And I'd been getting to be no end of a sceptic and thinking there might be something in Science and Spiritualism and the rest. Well . . . I'm punished for that. God lets you be for a bit . . . and then does something that makes you believe in him. I nearly went back to Justin to tell him all about it . . . for the sake of telling someone. But he's queer. He might have killed me . . . not that I'd mind much. Or he might kill you.

TREBELL. He'd likelier be off to his lawyer and start a divorce . . . and remember to be queer and Catholic again when he'd got it.

AMY. And that'd smash you.

TREBELL. At the moment . . . yes.

AMY. I'd be so sorry. Still . . . you'd marry me.

TREBELL. That is the usual thing.

AMY. Then you'd hate me the more, I suppose, for being the smashing of you. But we could get along. People do. I'm good company . . . and I'm still pretty. I can't see why you don't love me . . . just a little.

TREBELL. I can say that I love you. It's easily said.

AMY. You never once said it . . . you'd no need. That's pretty shameful. Did you think I wouldn't notice?

TREBELL. It's a sort of lying I dislike . . . using words that have no meaning to me.

AMY. Oh, don't talk cleverly now, Henry . . . please! Let's be practical. Tell me what to do.

To these pitiful, ridiculous, revelations what could he find to say ! But his own dry—and really rather priggish—piece of pedantry having roused her to a very wholesome impatience, he comes, readily enough, to the bearings of common sense, and, to that extent, of kindness.

TREBELL. Well . . . you may count on me for as much of my duty to the child . . . and to you, while the trouble lasts . . . as you'll let me do. My rights are forfeit. That's as it should be . . . the law shows some sense. You can't forfeit yours. A bad time . . . for a few months yet . . . you're bound to have. One or two people must know. If you choose to tell your husband now or later and risk the scandal . . . the rights and the wrongs of that we'd better talk out when you're calmer. But it's your duty, remember . . . whatever else happens . . . to keep yourself fit. And . . . oh, my dear girl ! . . . if kindness will do it, I'll be as kind as I know how to be. Well, now . . . you're not tied down . . . you can get off abroad . . . we'll cover your tracks. . . .

Intent on her human needs he has himself become human ; something more than mere kindness and common sense might be rising in him. But she has only listened with a growing horror, her eyes round and staring, her face set ; till at last she breaks out, dreadfully . . .

AMY. Are you expecting me to go through with this ?

TREBELL. [*echoing.*] . . . through with it ?

AMY. I'd sooner kill myself.

He looks at her gravely and speaks gravely.

TREBELL. You've no choice by now, I should suppose, but to go through with it . . . no reasonable choice.

AMY. I won't.

TREBELL. Put mischievous notions out of your head once and for all.

AMY. I'll kill myself sooner.

He is stern, and no kindliness can hide it. She seems to mean precisely what she says.

TREBELL. Steady . . . steady! This is the trouble, then . . . just this?

You'd not call it a laugh that escapes her.

AMY. Yes . . . thank you! . . . just this.

She is suffering; he can still be kind.

TREBELL. Try and talk frankly to me. You're not simply afraid?

AMY. Why not? I'm ill as it is.

TREBELL. Because Nature . . . if you'll let her . . . provides against that, you know. And there's other provision in these days. What's at the back of the fear?

To her poor twisted mind this is mere torture, and she cries out under it.

AMY. Oh . . . don't question me . . . and steady me . . . as if I were a beast being broken in! But that's what I am now . . . no better!

TREBELL. Come . . . come!

He puts a restraining hand on her. She breaks free and turns on him; desperate, weakly violent.

AMY. When I was a girl . . . and no more than a girl . . . I said to myself . . . and I didn't need to say it . . . that never, never, would I have a child.

TREBELL. Weren't you foolish, then, to marry?

AMY. One has to marry. I was a fool to marry Justin. He found out . . . after a bit. He thinks it a sin. I said I'd a right to choose. What do women's rights come to if that's not their right? So I left him.

TREBELL. But I don't understand your dread.

AMY. How should you? Love's beautiful . . . this is beastly. Oh dear, oh dear . . . when I've always been so clever about things that didn't matter much . . . to run up against two such impossible men! No

civilised woman wants children growing up round her to remind her she's growing old. If she's trapped into it she makes the best of it . . . or pretends to. Well . . . I won't pretend to. Do you mean to tell me I've no right to choose ?

She is growing a little shrill, shedding the daintiness that avails her nothing. Is there something common at the core of her ? He grows graver yet.

TREBELL. Here's something I've learnt to believe. We choose and think we've chosen wisely . . . then by some grace we blunder on a better thing. Then comes the test. Have we a sense of it . . . and the faith to go on into the unknown ?

AMY. A sense of what ? Faith ! Faith in what ?

TREBELL. My dear, my dear . . . beauty or brains, what are they worth . . . if we've not enough life in us to pay Life on demand ?

AMY. I'm in trouble . . . I'm in danger . . . and you talk platitudes to me ! Are you going to help me out of this hell or are you not ?

TREBELL. Through it.

AMY. No . . . no no !

TREBELL. You'll play no tricks. Mark that now.

AMY. Who's to stop me ?

TREBELL. You'll think of your child.

AMY. There's no child . . . and there's not to be . . . if I say so. And it's my right . . . no one else's to say so.

What answer can he make ? Their anger checked by silence, she relapses into pitifulness again.

AMY. And you've not even said you're sorry . . . you've not even kissed me. If you loved me just a little I mightn't feel so lost. But you don't . . . and you never did . . . I knew it all the time. So I shouldn't believe you now if you said you did. Well . . . I don't want to lie to you either. What's the use ?

I daresay I didn't love you very much . . . once it was over . . . and you'd gone away.

These seem to be the depths. But out of them his incorrigible intellect plucks a forlorn hope.

TREBELL. If that's the truth . . . let's start from that. . . .

AMY. I don't see what use the truth is. I wish I were dead.

At this moment the table telephone rings.

TREBELL. This'll be Cantilupe.

He goes to answer. She rises wearily, and with something of the indifference of weariness.

AMY. I've broken up your morning's work . . . I'm so sorry. The papers have been full of you . . . if I'd needed reminding of you. You're to save the country . . . or to ruin it. But somebody's always doing that.

TREBELL. He's coming up.

AMY. Then for heaven's sake open the door.

TREBELL. Are you going home now . . . back to Charles Street ?

AMY. I hadn't thought of it.

Love her—how can he pretend he does ? But he is touched ; and to a sort of reverence for her, little as this is what she asks.

TREBELL. We'll find salvation for you.

But this is the last straw. She rounds on him savagely.

AMY. Don't mock at me . . . don't cant ! You've done for me . . . isn't that enough ? I was happy and free. You've brought me down and degraded me . . . and what do you care ? I'm nothing to you now. I'm a sick beast . . . unclean . . . cancerous !

TREBELL. Hold your tongue, will you . . . before you believe what you're saying ? You unhappy woman . . . if life only seems like death to you !

AMY. Will you please open that door?

TREBELL *opens it and goes out upon the landing.
She braces herself—slips on the mask again—for
an encounter with LORD CHARLES.*

Tell Frances I waited in vain for her. . . .

TREBELL. He's still at the bottom of the stairs.

She takes a last chance to say tensely. . . .

AMY. Will you find me somebody to go to?

TREBELL. No.

AMY. Very well, then . . . very well . . . !

TREBELL. How are you, Cantilupe?

With this warning to her, CANTILUPE appears.

CANTILUPE. I'm a quarter of an hour late I'm sorry.

TREBELL. It's no matter.

AMY. I've been distracting him from statesmanship
for ten minutes of it. How do you do and good-bye!

CANTILUPE. A most dangerous distraction.

AMY. Sweet of you to say so. Well . . . I leave
you to disestablish the Church. I'm sure that between
you it'll be beautifully done.

TREBELL. Won't you wait . . . for Frances?

AMY. What's the use . . if you're sure she can't
help me?

TREBELL. I should wait.

WALTER KENT has followed CANTILUPE up the stairs.

*AMY strolls across to his room as if she might possibly
wait there.*

AMY. And is this your kennel? How precious!
Dear Frances does spoil you. It's the big room
made little. But you must get a pretty cover for your
typewriter.

WALTER KENT. It's as if the big room had had a baby
. . . I tell Miss Trebell.

AMY. Quite! How witty of you!

*WALTER, having made this magnificent gaffe, turns to
his chief.*

WALTER KENT. Wedgecroft has just sent back a message : will you see him for another moment on his way back to Wimpole Street ?

TREBELL. Yes.

WALTER KENT. Right.

He goes downstairs again. AMY O'CONNELL stands in the doorway of the little room. TREBELL goes towards her and they are out of CANTILUPE'S sight if not of his hearing.

TREBELL. Please wait for Frances.

AMY. I've no faith in any of you.

TREBELL. But you'd better wait.

She gives him a little twisted smile, but turns and goes into the room. He closes the door on her and looks as if he'd like to lock it. Then he comes back to CANTILUPE and his work, shutting his own door too. One sees at once why CANTILUPE is nicknamed His Eminence. In spite of his layman's dress—which has besides a dandified individuality about it, permissible, if well-contrived, in the man of fifty or over ; and CANTILUPE is over—he would be better suited by purple soutane and red cap, and his face would look well from one of El Greco's canvases. There is a natural, if constrained, courtesy in his speech and movements. He is almost the last man in London to pay old-fashioned compliments to women—and he refers to them as ladies. He has a charming mind and a subtle mind ; but he is not a strong man and he knows it ; his refuge is in obstinacy. He has the limpid eye of the enthusiast, but the mouth of a fanatic. And he is very wary of TREBELL.

CANTILUPE. How are you ?

TREBELL. Very well. How are you ?

CANTILUPE. A pleasant holiday ?

TREBELL. Most. A pleasant election ?

CANTILUPE. The usual thing. Not quite so degrading as usual, perhaps.

After which duellists' parade they settle to what

CANTILUPE, *at any rate, thinks to be a duel.*

TREBELL. Well . . . now?

CANTILUPE. I've brought you these memoranda back.

TREBELL. I hoped you'd keep them.

CANTILUPE. My cousin and I have certainly been discussing my possible inclusion in his new Cabinet. But after one turn of office twenty years ago I had made up my mind against another.

TREBELL. Why . . . if that's not too personal a question?

CANTILUPE. No. I find myself inevitably at war with the master-fallacy of a godless age . . . the belief that the things we do can be better . . . or other . . . than the thing we are. I distrust most modern legislation, that is to say.

TREBELL. [*appreciative but practical.*] But you'd sooner have something to say to this Disestablishment business . . . if it's got to be.

CANTILUPE. Oh, I'm for it . . . reluctantly . . . Church and State Tory though I remain, at heart. But, as the modern State scarcely reflects my heart's desire, I have come to think that the Church can best serve it . . . and best save her own soul . . . by breaking partnership.

TREBELL. Well . . . I hope you'll be in the Cabinet.

CANTILUPE. Horsham told me you hoped so. It was a surprise to me.

TREBELL. Till you read my memoranda.

CANTILUPE. I never expected a scheme of yours to seem so favourable to my point of view.

TREBELL. Could you do better for your section of the Church with a Bill of your own?

CANTILUPE. Not so well, as I'm sure you know.

"Section" I protest against. My friends and I are for the Church and the whole Church as we conceive the Church. But an appearance of sectionalism has been thrust on us . . . and whatever we might propose would excite prejudice. I doubt my use in a Cabinet anyway . . . I detest intrigue. I might do more for my own people . . . and for you even . . . by supporting your Bill from the back benches. Frankly, Mr. Trebell . . . I want to know why you want me on the front one.

TREBELL. You want to know that I'm not drafting a Bill to bring you into the Cabinet . . . so that once you're in I may back down upon every item of it while I keep you in . . . till I've so bedevilled your influence that it won't much matter whether you're out or in. For you're a danger on the back benches . . . even as I was. No . . . those are the policies by which we perish. But you see me at best, I suppose, as a sceptic lawyer, content if he can fence you all with your controversies into some form of words and not caring if you starve there. No. Again, no. You're wrong, believe me . . . though it's a safe start to think the worst of any man. I want you with me because you believe in your Church. And though I've to disestablish I'm not out to destroy. I hate all destruction.

CANTILUPE. I do believe you . . . and I beg your pardon.

TREBELL *has won the first bout, evidently.*

TREBELL. Thank you. Well . . . what will you examine me on? Appropriation . . . Buildings . . . ?

CANTILUPE. There'll be a lot of silly sentiment to combat over Buildings.

TREBELL. Yes. These idolaters of Art!

CANTILUPE. Will you show me one of them that cares a rap what goes on inside the church after he has preserved it?

TREBELL. No . . . they'll be a nuisance. Representation . . . pre-Restoration endowments?

CANTILUPE *is fingering through the memoranda.*

TREBELL *has the whole thing in his head.*

CANTILUPE. The figures there are troublesome.

TREBELL. Very rough figures so far.

CANTILUPE. Your solution of the country parish problem would make a good election cry. Ten square miles and a thousand a year for a curate and a car!

TREBELL. It's mainly a question of locomotion. I don't much like the Rural District options, though.

CANTILUPE. And your disputed surplus to go to Education?

TREBELL. Yes.

CANTILUPE. That's the heart of the plan.

TREBELL. The very heart of it.

CANTILUPE. It sounds well. And the more we quarrel over the loaves and fishes the more Education may get?

TREBELL. Do you object?

CANTILUPE. It asks a little courage to object. But every big Bill in my time has had its one provision which the Press would unite to praise and all Parties promise to support . . . in principle . . . upon a first reading. Yet it seldom survived Committee. I have wondered if it ever was meant to. Not quite perversely, I have sometimes opposed it from the start.

TREBELL. I shall stand by the education proposals.

CANTILUPE. Or fall?

TREBELL. I don't think I shall fall by them.

CANTILUPE. Well . . . nor do I! So I've been prying into them pretty sharply.

TREBELL. I supposed you would.

It is genial cut and thrust—though "genial," perhaps, is hardly the word for either of them. But they are getting on splendidly.

CANTILUPE. It comes to this. You think the old quarrel over the children is too dead to blaze up again over the teachers ?

TREBELL. Things have changed. Things do change. We've learnt a little. We do learn by being brayed in the mortar of experience. I'd have been on your side in the old quarrel. Atmosphere in a school or college . . . why, it's what most matters. The first thing a child must learn is that he lives by faith. One and one makes two, don't they, by God's grace . . . I'm told there's no other proof. If we could have done with textbook teachers . . . ! But there are never enough good men to go round . . . that's the perennial trouble in this over-engined civilisation. We've to put our money into finding and training them, though.

CANTILUPE. How many of these colleges do you think your surplus will run to ?

TREBELL. Fifty, I hope . . . more or less. I don't want 'em too big. And I mean to house them when I can . . . though we needn't give this away yet . . . in the country seat that the country gentleman can't sit in any longer. You're not enough of a Tory for me, Cantilupe. You were mourning last Budget over the sad fate of the big country houses. Won't it comfort you to see an Abbey or two turned back after four centuries' usurpation to something of the use it was meant for ?

This is fascinating, no doubt ; but CANTILUPE follows his trail.

CANTILUPE. And the Church colleges will be under Church control ?

TREBELL. Yes . . . I'll find the money elsewhere for the secular . . . and some of the undenominational . . . balance. There's a good lump being released . . . and a lot of slack to take up.

CANTILUPE here puts down the memoranda.

CANTILUPE. Would you let me ask you, Mr. Trebell . . . though I'm aware that in these days the question's thought almost an indecent one . . . what is your own attitude towards my Church?

TREBELL. I'd like you to know. I grew up in the late nineteenth-century, neo-Polytechnic belief that you couldn't take God seriously and be an F.R.S. And when I'd done wanting to be an Admiral of the Fleet and the engine-driver of the Scotch Express I wanted to be an F.R.S. For there were my father's books on the top shelves. He'd sold his ambitions for domesticity and a dispensary practice in West Croydon. But he died of it . . . and I forswore poverty. Later . . . in a certain loneliness of heart . . . I began to go to church again. I didn't want to be preached at. But I did want to feel myself . . . amid week-day battlings for success . . . one of the congregation of faithful men. I'd read to the end of my prayer-book, you perceive. And after all it was my Church as by law established. But that didn't last.

CANTILUPE. What lost you to us?

TREBELL. Intellectual conscience. I can't take your sacraments. I can't say your creeds. I've tried . . . I don't believe them. You do?

CANTILUPE. Certainly I do.

TREBELL. Damned odd you should! Without reserve?

CANTILUPE. With no reserve.

TREBELL. I can respect that. Save me from Mr. Facing-both-ways. The present may be his . . . but never the future.

CANTILUPE. You are to set my Church free to save herself from him.

TREBELL. Quite so. But when that's done . . . what will you do for me and for men of my kind in return? Churchmen at heart . . . members one of

another in science or statecraft . . . with no use at all for conventicles and their self-righteousness. Nor even for the promise of salvation hereafter . . . for we die pretty tired, most of us. But with much need to sanctify here on earth the world of power that our secular minds have made.

CANTILUPE. I have found it, I fear, to be a world of intellectual pride . . . with many simpler lessons still to learn.

Of a sudden he is on his defence, acrid and aloof. TREBELL breaks out in good-tempered exasperation . . .

TREBELL. Heavens above! Even now you don't repent?

CANTILUPE. Of what?

TREBELL. Of these . . . how many? . . . generations of the loss of us . . . of the men who've made the world as it is.

CANTILUPE. As it is! As it is!!

TREBELL. The while your Church has been a squabbling ground for third-rate minds . . . most of them; come now! . . . fighting unreal issues into such confusion that at last all Parties only want to be quit of you!

CANTILUPE. You are hardly refuting my accusation of arrogance.

TREBELL. Our issue's joined, then. Well . . . do you run away?

They are on good terms again. CANTILUPE takes up the memoranda to emphasise his disclaimer.

CANTILUPE. No.

TREBELL. Good. Then let's get the issue clear. The Establishment has been your fortress . . . but it has been your prison too.

CANTILUPE. I admit it. Well . . . a living faith need not fear freedom.

TREBELL. Nor learning for its own sake ?

CANTILUPE. Nor learning, certainly !

TREBELL. Very well. The statutes for your colleges are going to be the test of that. And I'll not be afraid of your faith and its dogmas either. Admit with me that hunger for knowledge is a spiritual hunger and its balking or its warping a sin against the light . . . and I ask no more of you.

“ On a huge hill
Cragged and steep Truth stands, and he that will
Reach her, about it and about must go.”

CANTILUPE *is really delighted.*

CANTILUPE. Donne !

TREBELL. The poet, wasn't he, of your Church's last great dilemma ? I believe in your Church too, you see . . . all apart from what your Church may believe in . . . and in more Churches than one. For I believe in vocation . . . in the calling of voices from that hill, however confusedly. I dislike trade . . . the shrewd mind . . . the measuring of profit . . . and property in toil. The world's great ages have had strength to spare and to waste. And even the waste . . . imaginings, art, adventures . . . was fruitful. The fruit of it is ours to-day. You promise men in their poverty a future life. Why not make them the gift of it now ? That's no paradox. Once we're through with youth's appetites and illusions, what does our carnal life hold for us ? The past becomes a picture-book. The moment as it passes can't be very interesting . . . saving your presence . . . for we live it ignobly chained. But the future ! That we create . . . selflessly . . . out of ourselves. We can be honourably happy there. And what wise creator will want to know too much about his creation ? I have strange visions of your churches, Cantilupe . . . and of week-day praises to God. Of Cathedral cloisters busy with dispute. And of every

parson in the country turned scholar and schoolmaster . . . with his soul really set upon eternal things. What a chance for you now . . . what a chance ! And it may be a last chance . . . so I'm out to make you take it. You shall give us in your freedom what you denied us in your fetters. You shan't leave any longer the world's powers and the men that wield them to the anarchy of unbelief. It may be our civilisation's last chance too. You Churchmen shall write us a creed for our children to believe. You shall sanctify their new world for them or perish.

Though he is still speaking to CANTILUPE he has, in a sense, ceased to speak to him. There is silence for a moment.

CANTILUPE. If my invitation stands and I join the Cabinet, it will be for the pleasure of hearing you propound this Bill to them.

There is ever such a slight touch of irony in the compliment. TREBELL responds to it.

TREBELL. Not in these terms !

CANTILUPE. No . . perhaps not. And you'll have some not too nice bargains to drive, I fear, in and out of Cabinet.

TREBELL. That's all in the day's work. But I needed another sort of understanding with you. Ah . . . you wanted my coat, did you, Cantilupe ? You shall have my cloak also. You'd have me go with you a mile ? By Jove, you shall go with me twain !

Their conference is breaking up. CANTILUPE has risen. He is, one remarks, taking the memoranda away with him again.

CANTILUPE. We'll go very willingly, I assure you, as far as we find we can go. Your heresy, Mr. Trebell, has its fascinations . . . as other such heresies have had. We can't burn you, nowadays . . . we must try to profit by you.

TREBELL. Yes. The blood of the martyrs you've made . . . that also has been the seed of the Church.

TREBELL has given of his best—for he felt the need—to win CANTILUPE. But it is hard to say how far he has succeeded.

CANTILUPE. The Church's wisdom has been to know how much, on the whole, may be expected of men. And the hells of this world are paved, don't you think, less with good intentions than with high ideals.

TREBELL laughs : it is a shrewd hit for a finish. He takes from his table the papers that HORSHAM returned him.

TREBELL. Here are more Appropriation figures . . . no, I'd like to put these tidy. I can show you a draft of the Fabrics scheme in a few days.

CANTILUPE. [*his eye twinkling coldly.*] And of those statutes ?

TREBELL. I'd like another talk first.

CANTILUPE. Could you lunch with me . . . on Thursday ?

TREBELL. Yes. We must find out our differences. Hullo !

They have moved to the door, and TREBELL has opened it. There stands WEDGECROFT, watch in hand. And one sees that the door of the little room is open.

WEDGECROFT. I was giving you two minutes more. [*to CANTILUPE.*] How are you ?

CANTILUPE. Is Brampton better ?

WEDGECROFT. Much. I've just been in to see him.

CANTILUPE. Good-bye.

Abruptly, as his habit is, he departs. WEDGECROFT strolls towards the fire. TREBELL, seeing CANTILUPE down the stairs, is alive to the little room's open

door. He goes in quickly to make sure the room is empty ; then, but not quite as quickly, he comes out again.

TREBELL. Been here long ? I'm sorry.

WEDGECROFT. No. No . . . not long. Converted his Eminence, have you ?

TREBELL. I shall yet.

WEDGECROFT. The sight of him might explain why the early Christians took a fish for their symbol.

TREBELL. Did you see Mrs. O'Connell ?

WEDGECROFT. On her way out.

TREBELL. She was waiting for Frances. Is she coming back ?

WEDGECROFT. She didn't say. By the way . . . is she a Catholic ?

TREBELL. He is.

WEDGECROFT. Ever met him ?

TREBELL. No.

WEDGECROFT. I knew him at Balliol. When he came into Irish money and land he thought it his duty to go back and live there. Then he went Republican. Does she see much of him ?

TREBELL. Not more than she can help, I think.

Neither TREBELL nor, be it noted, WEDGECROFT have seemed quite ingenuous in this little talk.

Well . . . what about Brampton ?

WEDGECROFT. Will you go and see him ?

TREBELL. When ?

WEDGECROFT. Now.

TREBELL. [*his look is dark, his thoughts are away.*] No, I can't. Yes . . . I could.

WEDGECROFT. Then you'd better. He wants me to order him to Scotland to-morrow. He wanted me to order him pork pie and old Marsala for lunch. For God's sake give him something . . . a little more digestible . . . to occupy his mind. You've messed

up my whole morning, Henry. Curse you . . . and farewell.

TREBELL. Sorry !

WEDGECROFT. You're not. My patients may die in dozens . . . what would you care? Hullo, young woman !

This last is evidently to someone unseen by us, whom he meets on the stairs. He is gone. TREBELL, left alone for a moment, his face still dark and thoughtful, fingers the telephone, then discards it as useless and sits down to write a note. LUCY DAVENPORT appears on the landing and stands looking from one room to the other. TREBELL, conscious of interruption, glances up.

LUCY. No . . . please !

TREBELL. D'you want your young man . . . my young man . . . our young man? He's on an errand.

LUCY. He's back . . . paying his cab.

TREBELL. Taking him out to lunch ?

LUCY. May I ?

TREBELL. Do.

He has gone back to the writing of his note. WALTER KENT comes upstairs and turns into his own room, saying . . .

WALTER KENT. You've no right up here. Go and hide. You'll get me the sack.

TREBELL. Walter !

WALTER KENT. Sir ?

TREBELL. Ring for a messenger boy.

WALTER KENT. Right !

TREBELL finishes his note and has only the envelope to address.

TREBELL. But I wish you'd get married, you two . . . and have done with it.

LUCY. I have named the day. We're to be the first pair tied up by your Disestablished Church. Or shall

I put it off? I've come to tell you I will. For two years. And I'll go to India and come back by Japan . . . the Tyrrells have asked me to. I sent him on his holiday with you . . . that was a pledge of good faith. But if you're still so sure I'm a nuisance I'll get right out of the way.

TREBELL *looks up, a little touched.* WALTER *has come out of his room and the two stand together in the doorway, a very wholesomely happy pair.*

TREBELL. He'd only fret for you. D'you hear this?

WALTER KENT. I'm not sure I want to marry her anyhow. She takes me too seriously. I shall never go the pace. But she'd make you a perfect secretary.

LUCY. I tried for that once . . . through Miss Trebell . . . when I thought you no longer loved me. He wouldn't look at me. But I'll make you a perfect secretary.

WALTER KENT. Well . . . !

TREBELL. Run along! The Saumarez appointment's at two?

WALTER KENT. Quarter past. I'll be back.

They go happily downstairs together. TREBELL *seals his envelope, his face still very dark.*

ACT III

MR. HORSHAM'S drawing-room in Queen Anne's Gate, with its soft grey walls, its mellow old French carpet and furniture, its spare and formal decoration, is a fit setting for the man himself, mellow of mind, classic in his tastes, his emotions faded, of a temper sceptical and fastidious. He is standing at this moment before a noiseless fire (he dislikes noise, and the very fires in his house, even as the servants that lay and light them, seem to have learnt to conform), his head bent, his benign brow wrinkled in perplexity. If he glances up he sees on the sofa in front of him WEDGECROFT, who, though it is late, is still wearing the regulation kit of his busy doctor's day, and is sitting there, nervously irritable—as he seldom is—and depressed. With his back to them both, on a sofa with its back to them, is GEORGE FARRANT, knees apart, hands clasped, head bent, very glum. HORSHAM glances beyond him to the big double doors of the library and to the door on the left of them that leads to the passage, as if either of them might open to admit an expected visitor. And, if his gaze travels back along the room, it passes over the long black piano ranged against the wall to where, poised on the music bench, as if it were a stool of repentance, is LORD CHARLES CANTILUPE. His face is grave and set, but calm. The general air of the conclave, however, suggests a problem discussed and discussed and yet unsolved. It is, in fact, a charged silence that FARRANT breaks by asking irritably . . .

FARRANT. But what time did you ask him to come, Horsham?

MR. HORSHAM. O'Connell?

FARRANT. Yes . . . we're talking of O'Connell, aren't we?

MR. HORSHAM. [*pacifically.*] Did you give him a definite time, Wedgecroft?

WEDGECROFT. Not before half-past ten, I told him.

FARRANT. [*eyeing his watch.*] Twenty to eleven . . . just.

WEDGECROFT. He'll come.

FARRANT. Blackborough's not turning up, though.

MR. HORSHAM. He was dining at Coombe . . . I sent a note after him.

CANTILUPE. Saumarez caught me by mere chance, Cyril . . . I was off to Tonbridge by the ten-fifteen. I happened to go home for some papers.

This little eddy of talk dies down. Then HORSHAM ; in bland recognition of the irony of life's happenings (his first apprehension of them is always of their irony, his blandness in the face of it seems never to fail him) . . .

MR. HORSHAM. And I interned O'Connell during the Rebellion, did I?

WEDGECROFT. You did.

MR. HORSHAM. Surely . . . surely he has no grievance against me because of that!

CANTILUPE. But . . . Mrs. O'Connell being dead . . . what is to precipitate the scandal?

CANTILUPE was a late arrival, evidently. HORSHAM gives him the necessary facts, cut and dry.

MR. HORSHAM. The inquest.

CANTILUPE. Which can't be avoided?

MR. HORSHAM. It seems not.

CANTILUPE. To-morrow?

MR. HORSHAM. To-morrow.

WEDGECROFT *breaks out*.

WEDGECROFT. Good God! . . . I'd have risked the police-court and given the certificate if she'd died right away . . . and I thought she was gone that evening she sent for me. But O'Connell, when he came, said : Call in old Fielding Andrews. I couldn't object.

MR. HORSHAM. How much had Sir Fielding to be told ?

WEDGECROFT. Not about Trebell, of course.

MR. HORSHAM. But the yet more unpleasant part of the business . . .

WEDGECROFT. Heavens! . . . if I'd left him to find that out he'd have suspected me. And he'd have found out. He's half blind and three-quarters deaf . . . but there's not much he misses. Well . . . I might have risked it . . .

FARRANT. Oh, my dear fellow . . . quixotic !

WEDGECROFT. . . . but whoever the quack was she did go to . . . the police may be on his track . . . the whole thing might have come out that way . . . and then where should I have been ?

FARRANT. I suppose . . . even now . . . there's no getting hold of the Coroner ?

FARRANT, Privy Councillor though he is, speaks for the moment as might a village schoolboy of robbing an orchard. HORSHAM is very definite on this point. And when he is definite upon a question—he seldom seems to be—he sings a little song . . .

MR. HORSHAM. No, no ! No, no, no ! No, no, no, no !

FARRANT. Brampton thought we'd better try.

This offers a pleasant opening.

MR. HORSHAM. He would think so ! I admire Brampton . . . I have even had moments of liking for Brampton . . . and I have been in four Cabinets with

him. But for flippancy of mind . . . and for perversity of conduct . . . in great matters as in small . . . he is unsurpassed.

CANTILUPE. Was he quite too ill to come to-night?

FARRANT. He said Wedgecroft wouldn't hear of it.

WEDGE-CROFT. True! I didn't hear of it.

MR. HORSHAM. Was it necessary, then, to confide in him? He's the greatest gossip in London. The one pleasure life has left him . . . apart from bullying her ladyship . . . being his scabrous little chats with the dozen or so young women whom he honours with his senile attentions!

If HORSHAM were an old woman—and his opponents have been known to call him so—he might, one fears, be accounted a cat. But, really, this is an exceptional outburst. His temper at the moment is seriously tried. He must keep his serenity for the business in hand. A little snappishness is a safety-valve. Still, one sees well enough why his colleagues do not court the rough side of his tongue. FARRANT'S own crest falls a little.

FARRANT. Leave nothing undone, I thought . . .

MR. HORSHAM. Even the unwise thing! You may be right. Sometimes one's very errors conspire to help one. Try the Coroner if you like!

FARRANT. No . . . I admit I don't fancy being snubbed by a Coroner.

WEDGE-CROFT rather roughly brings the talk back to the point.

WEDGE-CROFT. Besides . . . this man's keen on these cases. He had one last year he kept adjourning till they did nab the culprit. And the Mail wrote leaders and reported him verbatim. There's a lot of birth-control propaganda in his district. That has his back up.

CANTILUPE. Small wonder!

There is cold passion in his voice as he says this.

Two subjects so rouse him—birth-control and vivisection—and he does not argue about them.

WEDGECROFT. He's a Plymouth Brother.

CANTILUPE. [*disappointed.*] Really! But that's not right either.

MR. HORSHAM. [*his eyes upturned to the classic Adam ceiling.*] Why do not the members of that distressful sect abandon a designation which does so suggest gin-drinking?

WEDGECROFT. [*forcibly.*] You're at O'Connell's mercy . . . that's what it comes to. If he doesn't keep a guard on his tongue, there'll be an adjournment . . . and the whole story will be out. I've said all I can say to him . . . so has Farrant. If this conclave can't impress him . . . Trebell's done for.

CANTILUPE. Did she confess to her husband?

WEDGECROFT. I don't think she opened her mouth from the time he came till she died. But he found a letter Trebell wrote her . . . ten days ago . . . on her table. She'd never had it.

MR. HORSHAM. A letter! I ask you!! Here's a lawyer and a man of the world . . . in a situation of this sort . . . writes the woman a letter!

WEDGECROFT. It wouldn't have meant much . . . apart from the catastrophe.

MR. HORSHAM. [*fatherly, grandfatherly, quite patriarchal.*] My dear Wedgecroft . . . when trouble begins . . . political or personal . . . write one letter only . . . the one that you know will get you safe out of it. And let that be a short one.

WEDGECROFT. Anyhow . . . once she was dead he told me to tell O'Connell the whole truth. And I had to . . . or he'd have gone himself to tell him. I had to stop that somehow.

CANTILUPE. Mrs. O'Connell consulted you first of all . . . did you say?

WEDGE-CROFT. I met her at Trebell's just by chance . . . last Tuesday week it was . . . the day he got back from abroad.

CANTILUPE. [*gravely.*] I was there.

WEDGE-CROFT. Were you? So you were.

MR. HORSHAM. You met her at Trebell's . . . at Trebell's!

FARRANT. She was friends with Frances.

MR. HORSHAM. Frances?

FARRANT. His sister.

WEDGE-CROFT. By the way . . . Frances knows nothing yet.

MR. HORSHAM. Ah . . . yes! An exceptional woman . . . a modestly intelligent woman!

WEDGE-CROFT. She tackled me . . . saved her face by a few lies . . . and asked me plump to help her out. I told her I couldn't . . . I knew there was no excuse. Oh . . . there are men who would have on one pretext or another.

MR. HORSHAM. Really! Reputable men?

WEDGE-CROFT. I believe you gave one of 'em a knight-hood.

*He's not sorry for the chance of a dig at HORSHAM.
HORSHAM is horrified.*

MR. HORSHAM. Surely not!

WEDGE-CROFT. No . . . it wasn't you.

MR. HORSHAM. But are these practices known to their colleagues?

WEDGE-CROFT. Oh, my dear Horsham! When I retire . . . if you're in office . . . I shall write you an open letter entitled: How not to organise the Medical Profession.

MR. HORSHAM. Please don't! What unkindness have I ever done you? Please, my dear Wedgecroft, don't!

WEDGE-CROFT. I suppose I might have sent her to one of them . . . and I wish I had now. Then if things

had gone wrong she'd have died in the odour of sanctified science . . . and there'd have been an end of that.

CANTILUPE. Where did she go ?

WEDGECROFT. I've no notion.

CANTILUPE. Who did send her ?

WEDGECROFT. I've no idea. She bolted out of sight and knowledge for a week . . . without even a maid . . . to some dirty little country lodging. That's what put her in the cart. Then she dragged herself back with a temperature of a hundred and three . . . and sent for me. Even then she didn't tell me the full facts. So when O'Connell came I spoke to him quite openly. All he said was that it wouldn't have been his child.

TREBELL and their own troubles vanish from their minds for a moment.

FARRANT. Poor devil !

MR. HORSHAM. Poor woman !

FARRANT. There's one thing more you might make clear, Wedgecroft . . . that Trebell didn't even know of her going to this quack.

WEDGECROFT. She'd threatened to go . . . he was trying to stop her. His letter shows that. She disappeared . . . he was trying to find her . . .

FARRANT. Otherwise I'd not be lifting a finger to save him.

MR. HORSHAM. How long have you known O'Connell, George ?

FARRANT. I was with him at Harrow . . . we found together. I've hardly seen him since. And I wouldn't have spoken to him now . . . after what he did in the Rebellion . . . but for this.

MR. HORSHAM. Oh . . . why ? Still, I wish I hadn't interned him.

CANTILUPE. But may I ask, Cyril, why I am here ?

Before HORSHAM can answer, SAUMAREZ, his secretary,

comes quietly from the library. SAUMAREZ is a man of forty. He has abandoned a normally distinguished career in the Civil Service out of devotion to HORSHAM and from a dislike of routine. In his spare moments—he has few—he walks disinterestedly in the more removed paths of literature.

SAUMAREZ. Mr. O'Connell's come.

MR. HORSHAM. In there, is he ?

SAUMAREZ. Will you see him alone first ?

MR. HORSHAM. I think not. And do go home now, Saumarez. You've had a long day . . . and two hours of it with your dentist !

SAUMAREZ. I'm all right, sir. Besides . . . what about Blackborough ? You must be pretty tired yourself.

SAUMAREZ returns to the library.

MR. HORSHAM. I am very tired. I left Lympne at seven this morning . . . I've been at it ever since. I read the whole Nigeria report on the way up . . . I detest reading in a car.

CANTILUPE. Cyril . . . what is my position . . . ?

MR. HORSHAM. Sh !

For the library door has opened and SAUMAREZ' voice can be heard saying "Mr. O'Connell, sir." And JUSTIN O'CONNELL comes in. He is a man, as we have just heard, of Farrant's age, but he looks older ; an Irish gentleman and scholar, and no foreigner could look more foreign among these Englishmen than he does. His face is lined by more than thought, by intellectual passion. A man capable of devotion and of suffering, but not, one would say, of happiness. Whatever his thoughts or feelings are now, however, they are masked in a frigid, formal politeness. HORSHAM, sensitive to this, subdues his welcome and his introductions to tonelessness.

MR. HORSHAM. How do you do? Let me see . . . do you know my cousin, Charles Cantilupe? Farrant? . . . yes. We are still expecting Russell Blackborough. Sir Henry Brampton is ill. Do sit down.

o'CONNELL does so; and the rest re-settle themselves—all but WEDGECROFT, who in the ensuing pause says, half aloud, to HORSHAM . . .

WEDGECROFT. I could wait a bit for Blackborough and tell him all he need know. That'll free Saumarez. Then you won't want me again.

MR. HORSHAM. Thank you so much.

o'CONNELL. If you're not still busy at this hour, Dr. Wedgecroft, would you perhaps wait a few minutes also for me? . . . but a very few, I think, it will need to be.

WEDGECROFT. All right.

This little speech of o'CONNELL's only deepens the chill with which his very appearance affected the gathering; and WEDGECROFT's intentionally off-hand response as he passes into the library does nothing to lift it. Yet another silence follows; HORSHAM is still feeling his way. But o'CONNELL himself breaks it.

o'CONNELL. You sent for me, Mr. Horsham.

This allows the pleasantest of responses, which comes promptly and charmingly.

MR. HORSHAM. My message gave you, I hope, no impression of being sent for.

But charm he never so wisely, HORSHAM will charm here in vain.

o'CONNELL. As an Irishman I am happily less concerned nowadays to know by what persons, in or out of office, this country is governed. Very well . . . you did not send for me. But I am here.

MR. HORSHAM. And you know what we have to ask you.

O'CONNELL. I think I do. Farrant and Wedgecroft at least have not spared energy in impressing upon me that if this man's adultery with my wife becomes as notorious to-morrow as its consequences for her are to be . . . public opinion may make it hard for you to add him to your government.

MR. HORSHAM. Public opinion . . . so called . . . so called ! . . . would, rightly or wrongly, but quite unfailingly, oust him from public life for some years to come at least.

O'CONNELL. It is your business to be aware of such things.

HORSHAM *now faces his task.*

MR. HORSHAM. Mr. O'Connell . . . a great wrong has been done you . . . and no one here will say a word to excuse it. Nor have we any title to ask your forgiveness for the guilty man. But for the reputation . . . and so for the very existence . . . not of the man, but of the statesman, I am prepared to plead with you . . . and I do.

But O'CONNELL will have none of these subtleties either.

O'CONNELL. My wife is dead. For Mr. Trebell . . . I do not know the man . . . in the statesman I am uninterested. But I am to cover their sin to-morrow . . . am I . . . with a lie ?

This is really rather brutal, and FARRANT brings good British common sense into the account.

FARRANT. No . . . you won't have to lie as far as I can see. The Coroner must keep his questions within bounds. Well . . . you'll have to lie by implication. In a good cause ! So that won't imperil your immortal soul, I take it.

O'CONNELL *turns to him with grave disdain.*

O'CONNELL. Our souls are in constant peril. That is not troubling me.

FARRANT. Well, what is the worry, then ? I've

talked myself to a standstill with you. So has Wedgecroft. We've not found out.

O'CONNELL. No? It was not the way, perhaps.

Irony is lost on FARRANT : the more credit to his good heart.

FARRANT. I haven't excused Trebell . . . I'm not defending that sort of thing. There's the old sign still stuck up : Trespassers will be prosecuted. Mostly they're not. If the game amuses you . . . you run the risk. But no one expects this sort of consequence. If you won't think of his reputation . . . think of your wife's. Why make a perfectly unprofitable mess of things now?

It does not occur to dear FARRANT that to talk himself to a standstill yet again will be profitless : it does, however, to HORSHAM.

MR. HORSHAM. May we hear your difficulties, please, Mr. O'Connell . . . if you think we can help you in them?

CANTILUPE breaks silence, pale-voiced.

CANTILUPE. May I just say, Cyril . . . all, I think, that I shall want to say. You are a Catholic, I believe, Mr. O'Connell . . . you are a Christian gentleman. Trebell will have need of your forgiveness. I cannot tell you he is asking it . . . and we are told [*a glance at HORSHAM*] we have no right to. He may yet be thinking . . . even as we seem to be . . . of less profitable things. But . . . after God's forgiveness . . . he will need yours. And if you forgive him you will know better than we whether you should then save him from such clumsy vengeance as this world takes.

For the first time a little life stirs in O'CONNELL's face.

O'CONNELL. You are an apt advocate, Lord Charles.

From the library comes MR. BLACKBOROUGH, business-like as usual, but too business-like to emphasise his interruption needlessly.

MR. HORSHAM. Ah! You've met Russell Blackborough?

O'CONNELL. No.

BLACKBOROUGH. How d'you do?

MR. HORSHAM. . . . who joins us, I'm sure, in this appeal to you.

BLACKBOROUGH. Heartily. I've seen Wedgecroft.

When one says "Heartily" with such convinced gravity but with so little heartiness as that, one means to imply that really the matter is too near one's heart for easy emotional expression. With BLACKBOROUGH, of course, this may be so. He sits, with equal conviction, in the nearest chair. HORSHAM, now gently dominating, proceeds . . .

MR. HORSHAM. And . . . to sum up . . . with forty years of public life to look back upon . . . I have seen men come and I have seen them go . . . but I do not remember a career of more potent promise than is Trebell's at this moment. A certain eccentricity of attitude may have hampered him so far. But office with its exigencies will cure that. I approached him upon this Disestablishment question last July with much misgiving, I confess. But his reduction of the problem . . . fraught, as we know, with the passions of centuries . . . to practical terms has so far been more than remarkable. Talent for politics is not uncommon. Genius is rare . . . how rare! I do not hesitate to say that I discern it in Trebell. Your country needs him, Mr. O'Connell. My country, then . . . if you, unhappily, now count yourself a stranger here. What more can I say?

With another man the unfortunate anti-climax would have spoiled the whole effect. But HORSHAM has a way of making even his blunders effective, by investing his recovery from them with an appealing, helpless charm. Yet O'CONNELL shows no response, and FARRANT has another simple try.

FARRANT. Oh . . . be a good fellow. Come!

And now they definitely wait for his reply.

O'CONNELL. Do I seem stubborn? I'm sorry . . . it is not quite that. But I am now a stranger to your time as to your country, Mr. Horsham . . . and such talk as this means nothing to me. I have chosen for my refuge a century in which men had to have the courage even of their sins . . . and my statecraft has been studied under the first Edward.

MR. HORSHAM. [*so comprehending.*] Yes . . . yes, indeed. And only the other day, in a little address I had to make at Gray's Inn, I referred to that remarkable chapter upon the Confirmatio Cartarum. . . .

O'CONNELL, *it is to be regretted, quite ignores this compliment.*

O'CONNELL. What, then, are your politics to me? And, if you must rouse me from my indifference to you . . . better think, perhaps, what you may rouse.

FARRANT. I know! You're a Republican . . . you hate the lot of us . . . we're your Saxon oppressors . . .

O'CONNELL. I am not a Republican . . . nor any other sort of lunatic. But it was just possible, Farrant, to prefer the folly and passion of my own people to the sloven good-humour which is the boast of yours. Yes, you can rouse me to hate you . . . for all you do . . . and for what you are. And the hate will come from beyond me . . . so that I will be justified of it.

FARRANT *can endure it no longer. He flings out of his chair.*

FARRANT. O'Connell . . . I'm sorry for your trouble. But what you're talking about now I'm damned if I know. This conversation had better finish without me.

MR. HORSHAM. Patience . . . George . . . !

FARRANT. No, if it gratifies him to wreck Trebell's

career and put your government in Queer Street . . .
let him. He can. Good God Almighty !

This last exclamation springs from him as he opens the library door for escape ; and it seems to have nothing to do with his main protest—though it just might have. But he does not escape. On the contrary he shuts the door again quickly.

CANTILUPE. What's the matter ?

FARRANT. Nothing. Go ahead. I'll hold my tongue. I'll try to.

He sits down incontinently. CANTILUPE had wondered for a moment if he felt ill. HORSHAM, however, calmly continues . . .

MR. HORSHAM. Mr. O'Connell will not yield, I am sure, to any such vulgar temptation.

CANTILUPE. But what is it you hate in us, may I ask, Mr. O'Connell ?

O'CONNELL. What . . . when even you can speak to me of forgiveness as if it were a penny in my pocket . . . and a ransom for him from the jealous and ignorant mob that you've made your masters !

As incontinently FARRANT gets up again and vanishes into the library. HORSHAM is growing a little fretful.

MR. HORSHAM. Whatever is the matter with George ?

O'CONNELL. This clever fellow with his clever scheme ! Is the fate of the two of them worth a lie ? For your time breeds such . . . and will . . . till its corruption burst. You might better thank me to rid you . . .

Once again the library door is opened, this time with a sort of violent difficulty. There might be a tussle taking place. There is ; though it is an all but noiseless one. In a second the result of it is evident. TREBELL stands in the doorway, and FARRANT behind him, rather dishevelled. The assembly is speechless ;

well it may be. But o'CONNELL and TREBELL himself seem the least concerned. TREBELL speaks at last and casually enough.

TREBELL. Forgive me, Horsham, for thrusting myself in. Wedgecroft did his best. Sorry I've wrecked your collar.

This over his shoulder to FARRANT, who proceeds to adjust it. A collar escaped from its stud would discompose an archangel. o'CONNELL is now standing isolated facing TREBELL, who faces him full.

o'CONNELL. You are the man?

TREBELL. Yes.

o'CONNELL. Better we should meet.

TREBELL. Simpler. I thought so.

FARRANT. For God's sake, Trebell . . . come away!

TREBELL. What's happening?

MR. HORSHAM. Mr. O'Connell . . . how Trebell knew of your presence here I can't say. No one of us, I'm sure, is responsible for his.

TREBELL. You're begging me off. Is that the way?

FARRANT. This isn't.

The two ignore the rest. They might be alone together. The Irish voice keeps its level irony.

o'CONNELL. What then can I do for you?

TREBELL. What she was to you . . . you know. Tell the truth of it to-morrow. She has had to die to trap me. I'll tell the truth of that if need be.

If no one else understands, o'CONNELL does; and he blazes into a white fire of passion.

o'CONNELL. Yes, indeed . . . yes, indeed . . . a worthless woman! Had she borne you your child I could better have forgiven her. She could cheat me of mine and leave me. Is the curse of barrenness to be nothing to a man? God forgive her now. What have I left to forgive? I think we are brothers in misfortune, sir. [Then, as an afterthought, and as if grown aware of the

rest.] I shall say nothing to-morrow that will compromise Mr. Trebell.

A silence ; then, as no one else will, HORSHAM has to speak.

MR. HORSHAM. Thank you. Each one of us thanks you, I'm sure . . . for your magnanimity.

CANTILUPE. Thank you.

BLACKBOROUGH. Most magnanimous.

FARRANT. Good fellow . . . I knew you would be !

MR. HORSHAM. Thank you . . . once again, thank you.

TREBELL, be it noted, has not thanked him. Instead, and with a queer edge upon his voice, he says . . .

TREBELL. So all's well ! And I'm to go ahead, am I, Horsham ? I'd like to know.

FARRANT. Why not ?

TREBELL. It's what I came about.

MR. HORSHAM. You feel . . . I hope . . . under every obligation to go ahead.

TREBELL. If you say so.

FARRANT. But what's the trouble ?

TREBELL. What do you say, Blackborough ?

BLACKBOROUGH sees his drift. So does CANTILUPE, but he is silent. So does HORSHAM, but he'd ignore it. FARRANT soon begins to and refuses to. O'CONNELL, motionless, watches him keenly.

BLACKBOROUGH. I'm glad . . . heartily glad . . . that Mr. O'Connell sees his way to keep silent. Frankly . . . not for your sake only. You're one of us already in a sense. Besides . . . these scandals weaken confidence in the whole governing class. . . .

TREBELL. You're not answering my question.

BLACKBOROUGH. No . . . it's for Horsham to answer . . . not for me.

FARRANT. What question ?

BLACKBOROUGH. Why, my good Farrant . . . it's

pretty plain, I take it, that however considerate Mr. O'Connell here may be, this thing will be gossiped around . . . garbled, what's more . . . in the clubs and the lobbies . . . among all the people that count . . . and want to count . . . and have it thought they count. No such thing as a secret nowadays! That's what's in your mind, isn't it, Trebell? Can you still carry through a Bill of this sort in an atmosphere of that sort? It's a question, no doubt.

FARRANT *takes up the cudgels.*

FARRANT. Why need there be gossip if we keep our mouths shut?

BLACKBOROUGH. The tighter we shut 'em the more there'll be.

FARRANT. Then we must find means to stop it.

BLACKBOROUGH. If you make that discovery, Farrant, I'll see a statue's put up to you.

FARRANT. Well . . . whatever the gossip . . . if we stand solid behind Trebell we can pull him through.

BLACKBOROUGH. Oh . . . if we could postpone the Bill . . . !

FARRANT. You know that's impossible.

BLACKBOROUGH. Or if it were any sort of a Bill but a Church Bill . . . ! I may be wrong. I'd like to think so. I don't enjoy saying the unpleasant thing. But as well say it now as six weeks hence if it has to be said. However . . . it's for Horsham to decide . . . in the first place.

Is there a little sting in the tail of the sentence? Why should one suppose so? What he says sounds honest common sense. HORSHAM *is lulling.*

MR. HORSHAM. I think we might perhaps wisely leave both well and ill alone just for this evening. And Mr. O'Connell may be feeling that we have wandered from the point that concerns him.

From the beginning the situation has been [♯] *on CANTI-*

LUPE's nerves, none the less because he could speak calmly. But he now speaks his mind; distaste for the whole affair, and for his part in it, sounding in every word.

CANTILUPE. Cyril . . . you never should have brought me here. I hate to embarrass you further. I am thankful Mr. O'Connell has decided as he has. But let it be clear, please, that I cannot now sit in a Cabinet with Mr. Trebell.

No one shows surprise. TREBELL is, indeed, not surprised. O'CONNELL listens and looks, as a stranger in Court may look on, tensely, at the climax of a trial. Only FARRANT finds words.

FARRANT. Well . . . I'm damned!

CANTILUPE. I'm sorry . . . and this may not seem the moment to say it. But we've been at work upon the Bill together . . . for three hours to-day we were at work upon it . . . we were to meet again to-morrow. And I cannot . . . I cannot!

HORSHAM is bitter-sweet.

MR. HORSHAM. Thank you, my dear Charles . . . you do embarrass me. The moment is ill-chosen . . . so far I agree with you. I note your decision.

The position now gives BLACKBOROUGH the best of openings.

BLACKBOROUGH. But, my dear Cantilupe, why rush to these extremes?

CANTILUPE. I cannot discuss the matter.

BLACKBOROUGH. No, no . . . let's be helpful! I don't know much about the Bill . . . I've not been consulted. Frankly . . . what little I do know I don't like . . . and I wish we weren't pledged to it. But now Trebell's out of the worst of his mess . . . let's do the best we can . . . though it mayn't be all we'd like to do . . . for him . . . and the Bill . . . and the Party . . . and the country in general.

This all-embracing friendliness exasperates CANTILUPE beyond bearing.

CANTILUPE. Convictions apart . . . how . . . how ! . . . can I sit in Cabinet with a man . . . and canvass my friends for his Bill . . . for this Bill ! . . . with such a scandal for an unspoken end and beginning of my every talk with them ? It's impossible.

It is clearly time o'CONNELL took his leave.

o'CONNELL. Will Dr. Wedgecroft still be waiting for me ? May I wish you good-evening, gentlemen ? No, sir, you were right . . . I can do nothing for you. And had revenge been what I wanted . . . could I be leaving my interests in better hands ?

He says this and passes by TREBELL towards the library door, at which HORSHAM is standing.

MR. HORSHAM. Yes . . . he's here.

But at the door o'CONNELL turns.

o'CONNELL. Why don't you, though ?

TREBELL. Do what ?

o'CONNELL. Speak the truth . . . if it's in you to ? Outface the British lion in his smugness. If he didn't eat you . . . you could put your friends here in your pocket after, I think. Thank you, Mr. Horsham.

So he departs ; HORSHAM, in courtesy, following him.

BLACKBOROUGH. Irish ! Well . . . he would be.

FARRANT. He'll hold his tongue. That's the great thing ! Damn it, I believe he meant to all the time.

But TREBELL pays no attention ; he has turned to CANTILUPE.

TREBELL. Yes, Cantilupe . . . I'm an adulterer. So you'll have no more truck with me. Would our work be worthless ? Is the thing in itself a deadly sin to you ?

CANTILUPE. Living in the world I live in, I have little right, perhaps, to call that a strange question. Yes . . . it is.

TREBELL. And what's the atonement? Can you and your wise Church help me there?

CANTILUPE. I fear not . . . when you ask unrepentant.

TREBELL. Oh, I can repent . . . the thing done . . . and the folly of it. But the thing that I am . . . to repent that is to die.

CANTILUPE. God help you, Trebell . . . God help you!

This talk between the two has been strangely like a talk between friends. HORSHAM returns—returns to his troubles; but O'CONNELL at least he is rid of.

MR. HORSHAM. He's gone . . . they've both gone. I remember now why I interned him.

It is TREBELL's turn now to say his say, and he says it without wasting time.

TREBELL. Horsham . . . I've not made you the usual gentlemanly offer to stand aside. This job means more to me. I wasn't sent into the world to make things easy for you. I warn you, Cantilupe . . . I can carry this Bill as it stands . . . and no one else will. You care for what's in it . . . and I care. You'll find no one else does. But if you do stick to me, Horsham . . . and Blackborough thinks this incongruous catastrophe and his kind help out of it will turn me into a biddable underling . . . he's mistaken.

BLACKBOROUGH. [*tartly.*] That's uncalled for.

TREBELL. That mediæval Irishman is right. There'll be poisonous gossip. Well . . . I'll tell the truth. I'll stand up in my place in the House and say: This I've done . . . this I am . . . this and no more I repent. Will you back me after?

FARRANT. By God . . . I believe we might!

TREBELL. As a piece of policy I recommend it you. For if I win I'd carry the Bill for you without one bargain struck. If I go under . . . you'll be rid of a

most uncomfortable colleague. I'll do it . . . I'm serious.

BLACKBOROUGH. My dear fellow !

MR. HORSHAM. Public life is not to be lived nowadays, I fear, on such heroic heights.

TREBELL. Would that count for atonement, Cantilupe . . . would you stand by me then ? Yes, indeed . . . we might put Worldly Wiseman and Facing-both-ways in our pockets afterwards. Well, Horsham . . . it's up to you. But make up your mind as quick as you can, please. You must, though, mustn't you ? The job won't wait.

And he leaves them.

BLACKBOROUGH. Half off his head !

FARRANT. Do you wonder ?

BLACKBOROUGH. I met him on the doorstep. I thought Wedgecroft would get him away.

FARRANT. He nearly throttled me !

HORSHAM'S thoughts are already a little removed.

MR. HORSHAM. I'm afraid, you know, that I always found her a detestable little woman.

FARRANT. [*sturdily.*] I liked her. [*then candidly.*] My wife never liked her.

MR. HORSHAM. A harlot at heart ! How much better then . . . for all concerned . . . just to be a harlot.

FARRANT. Well, whatever she was . . . and she's dead . . . and I disagree with you . . . if he gets through to-morrow, you're not going back on him, I trust. For that'd be damnable.

He has shot an angry glance at BLACKBOROUGH.

BLACKBOROUGH. I haven't suggested you should go back on him . . . farther than you need go. Find him some other job.

FARRANT. He won't take another job.

BLACKBOROUGH. Oh . . . if he's going to be pig-headed !

CANTILUPE. Cyril, if you think Trebell can take the Bill through . . . you can do well enough without me. And I can do as much for it from the back benches . . . and more, I daresay, for the things in it that I've at heart.

BLACKBOROUGH. Yes . . . I don't doubt you can.

BLACKBOROUGH *lets this out with such a bang that*

CANTILUPE *turns to him, half surprised, half angry.*

CANTILUPE. What are you insinuating, may I ask?

BLACKBOROUGH *now asserts himself.*

BLACKBOROUGH. Horsham . . . when you do form your Cabinet you'll ask whom you choose to join it. By summoning us three, though, and Brampton . . . how is Brampton, by the way?

FARRANT. Better.

BLACKBOROUGH. I'm glad . . . to this rescue party, you imply, I may take it, that you count on us?

MR. HORSHAM. Quite.

BLACKBOROUGH. Very good. We're pledged to a Church Bill of some sort. I wish we weren't . . .

CANTILUPE. So you've told us . . . and we didn't need telling.

HORSHAM grows the more pacific as FARRANT grows angrier and CANTILUPE snappier in his nervous distress. BLACKBOROUGH, however, has no intention of losing his temper.

BLACKBOROUGH. My dear fellow . . . what good can it do us? At the best it's bound to be one of those damned cross-fire measures . . . with men opposite supporting you and your own side attacking you . . . disastrous to party discipline. You and Trebell have been cooking it up together . . .

CANTILUPE. The Bill is his.

BLACKBOROUGH. Brampton besides.

MR. HORSHAM. He has seen the figures.

BLACKBOROUGH. A most efficient little cabal.

CANTILUPE. I object to that term.

BLACKBOROUGH. [*with perfect good-humour.*] I withdraw it. And Trebell still talks of pushing the thing through the Cabinet . . . sic volo, sic jubeo. Plump and plain, I'd better tell you there may be things in it that won't at all suit me.

CANTILUPE. For instance ?

BLACKBOROUGH. Well . . . as you've not done me the honour to consult me, I can't be very precise.

MR. HORSHAM. I didn't know you were so interested in Church questions, Blackborough.

BLACKBOROUGH. I'm not . . . nor in any political question till it has to be answered. But these rumours of Utopian educational schemes . . . seminaries for teachers . . . countryside universities ! This isn't a time to be throwing the country's money about.

CANTILUPE. It is the Church's money. Do you want to relieve the rates with it ?

BLACKBOROUGH. We might do worse mischief. Seriously, Cantilupe . . . you stand for the Church, twopence coloured. I stand for it penny plain. Mine, that's to say, is the traditional British common-sense view of religion. Well, now . . . if you're going to leave us in the lurch with this Bill on our backs . . . not to mention Trebell, if Horsham thinks he can stick to him . . . I think we ought to have a pledge from you that you and your friends won't make trouble.

CANTILUPE. Why should we ?

BLACKBOROUGH. Because you'll be free from responsibility and you'll want to get all you can. And what one's friends lose one's enemies gain. That's an axiom in politics.

CANTILUPE. [*hotly.*] I wish to get nothing for my friends that is inconsistent with justice and righteousness.

BLACKBOROUGH. Quite so ! So we all say !

CANTILUPE. As long as this settlement . . . which the Bill provides for . . . as Trebell has drafted it and as Horsham has approved it . . . as long as that stands in its integrity . . . I shall support it.

BLACKBOROUGH *casts his eyes towards the heaven which in its inscrutable wisdom has made such men as CANTILUPE. But he treats him with masterly—if slightly masterful—patience.*

BLACKBOROUGH. I'm sorry . . . I'm not making myself plain. I admit no settlement. If you're keen on parts of the Bill . . . stay in the Government and fight for them . . . and I'll fight you fair. If Horsham does drop Trebell I suppose you will stay. Need you insist on his being dropped altogether? Why not wait and see if scandal does spread? We shall soon know. Oh . . . if mine were a foxy mind . . . I'd not be sorry, you'd think, to see a Bill I dislike made a hash of by a man that . . . ! After all . . . from the Party point of view . . . he's an outsider. What has Brampton to say, by the way?

FARRANT. About all this? Oh, it was meat and drink to him. He kept me an hour this afternoon telling me scandals of every Premier he'd served under. Not of you, Horsham.

MR. HORSHAM. Whatever he may not know of me he can be trusted to invent.

BLACKBOROUGH. But about the Bill . . . has Trebell been seeing him?

FARRANT. Once or twice. He thinks the finance will be fun because the Treasury will kick at it. But the fact is he's had a grudge against Theobald Rogers there ever since his last Budget . . . and he wants to pay him out. If Trebell doesn't come in, Brampton won't.

BLACKBOROUGH. Really?

FARRANT. Brampton thinks a lot of him.

If FARRANT had not been dead tired, he'd never have

done it. As it is, he stays innocent of what he has done. HORSHAM sees, but gives hardly a sign of seeing. What is the use? BLACKBOROUGH'S speech now is measured, his tone judicious.

BLACKBOROUGH. Brampton would be a loss. His mind's not what it was . . . but he cuts a figure still. Well . . . there's nothing more to say, for the moment, is there? Good-night.

He has, indeed, no more to say.

FARRANT. But what is settled . . . about Trebell?

CANTILUPE. Cyril . . . I wish to do whatever is best. But consider my position.

FARRANT. And consider our position if we drop Trebell and he rounds on us. We shan't have fifty majority. And for this sort of Bill there's bound to be cross-voting.

BLACKBOROUGH. Then it won't be my sort of Bill. Our business is to compose our differences and bring in a Conservative Bill that a Conservative majority can vote for. •

CANTILUPE. That will be a worthless Bill.

FARRANT. But we've laid down the principles of the thing and they've been approved of by the Press and the Public . . .

BLACKBOROUGH. My good Farrant . . . don't talk like a patent medicine advertisement. Praise from the Press in a chorus . . . they abuse you the worse later on . . . when they want something fresh to say. The Public . . . can't hold an idea in its head as long as my dogs can.

FARRANT. Trebell can knock now any Church Bill but his own to pieces in Committee. He could turn us out on it . . . and I shouldn't blame him.

BLACKBOROUGH. No . . . it's the sort of thanks one gets for saving a man from gaol . . . yes, from gaol very likely. But I don't think so. Even he'd not have the

hardihood to talk Christian statesmanship with the dirt of this scandal still spattered over him. Not that we should spread it abroad, of course, unless . . . ! No . . . I should always be against such meanness. But I shouldn't . . . in that case . . . feel called upon to contradict it. Horsham . . . you've been kindness itself to him. If you want to be kinder yet . . . in my opinion . . . you'll drop him and let him go back to the Bar for a bit . . . he must have been making his pile there. Or put him on the Bench. You've a reputation as a cynic. The Divorce Court ought to be vacant soon. Seriously . . . ! But you don't need my advice. Still . . . you'd rather I made my position clear.

He has made himself, his position, and his intentions crystal clear to HORSHAM, who answers very drily . . .

MR. HORSHAM. Much.

BLACKBOROUGH. Good-night.

MR. HORSHAM. Thank you for coming.

BLACKBOROUGH. Can I drop you, Farrant ?

FARRANT. No, I'll walk . . . thanks. [*the gratitude more an effort than an afterthought.*]

BLACKBOROUGH. Right ! Don't come down.

He departs. He has done a good evening's work and knows it. They detest him.

FARRANT. And what sort of a very private life has he led, I wonder.

MR. HORSHAM. I should suppose that his relations with the gentler sex have always been business-like . . . most business-like. The social scandals of the Industrial North do not, however, penetrate to our sophisticated world . . . a fact, of which, we must hope, no undue advantage is taken.

HORSHAM can always salve his troubles with a little acrid humour. Lucky man !

FARRANT. Well . . . what is settled? It's very late.

MR. HORSHAM. What's settled? . . . since you so recklessly keep asking! Why . . . that I drop Trebell.

FARRANT—*bless him !—is surprised.*

FARRANT. D'you mean it?

MR. HORSHAM. My dear George . . . if, after listening to Blackborough, you imagine he now means to let me form a Cabinet with Trebell in it . . . I must admire your innocence.

FARRANT. But . . . good God! . . . is one to be bullied by Blackborough? Leave him out, then.

MR. HORSHAM. I should love to . . . and his friends and relations besides.

FARRANT. No . . . you can't. Get him in, then, with Trebell . . . and assert yourself.

MR. HORSHAM. No leader who needs to do that, George, must ever dare to.

FARRANT. Oh, don't be paradoxical . . . I'm tired. • I don't see, though . . . if O'Connell stands pat . . . what more Blackborough can do now than he always could have done.

MR. HORSHAM. Don't you? Brampton, who despises him . . . Charles here, with some prestige in Church matters . . . and Trebell, till this happened . . . were a pretty strong combination. He'd have had to knuckle under to it. Break it up . . . and there's his chance . . . as he saw.

CANTILUPE. But isn't this the heart-breaking thing in politics? Some great chance . . . if every circumstance will conspire in its favour. One slip . . . and it's against it they're conspiring.

MR. HORSHAM. I am glad you appreciate that, Charles.

HORSHAM *has gone to a writing-table and is beginning*

a letter. CANTILUPE responds across the room rather pathetically.

CANTILUPE. My saying I'd stand out made the mischief, d'you mean?

FARRANT *rounds on him quite brutally.*

FARRANT. Well, what else? Serve you damned well right, Charles, if your Bill is wrecked.

CANTILUPE. But Blackborough saw the situation sooner than I did.

MR. HORSHAM. Still . . . never play your opponent's game for him. Your temperament, Charles, leads you to embrace misfortunes.

FARRANT *thinks a little blame may as well be put on HORSHAM.*

FARRANT. Why did you bring him here to-night anyhow?

MR. HORSHAM. Oh . . . he's as touchy as a beauty losing her looks. If I'd left him out . . . ! No, no . . . no, no, no! Flattering him into playing the magnanimous . . . that was the only chance.

CANTILUPE. He's after the Exchequer himself, I suppose.

MR. HORSHAM. Yes . . . and he'll get it now . . . I've no one else. When you let out we'd lose Brampton, George, he launched his ultimatum . . . did you notice? No . . . you didn't.

FARRANT. But . . . good God! . . . why didn't you stop me?

Poor FARRANT; the tables are turned on him!

MR. HORSHAM. I'd as soon know how I stand to-night as know it a week hence . . . and sooner. What's Trebell's number in Berkeley Street?

FARRANT. Forty-seven.

Then they both realise what the letter is. Veritably a funereal air falls.

CANTILUPE. Are you writing to tell him now?

MR. HORSHAM. Yes.

FARRANT. I say ! . . . can't you wait a bit ? Something may happen.

MR. HORSHAM. No.

FARRANT. I hate this.

They feel guilty and look it. HORSHAM addresses his envelope.

CANTILUPE. But, Cyril . . . who's to take the Bill through ?

MR. HORSHAM. I don't know yet. I can't . . . there's the F.O. complication. I rather advise you to stand clear and screw out of us any scraps of the old scheme that you'd really set your heart on. I shall find somebody.

He says it quite cheerfully. He always has found somebody.

FARRANT. I don't care so much about the Bill . . . but I do bar Trebell's being dished . . . just when we'd got him clear from the real mess too. What fools it leaves us looking ! Surely, Horsham, with your authority . . .

HORSHAM has finished his letter and addressed and closed it.

MR. HORSHAM. You take, I think, a romantic view of my office, and, consequently . . . though I don't complain . . . an unromantic one of me. What authority will make men abler . . . or more honest . . . or less selfish than they are ? I have to match you all with . . . and against . . . each other, so that from the heat of your differences a little power to do something may, if possible, result. The art of the thing lies in having such a quick sense of what won't work that before we've all quarrelled irretrievably I have set you to something else that will. Shall I post this . . . or had one of you better see that he gets it to-night ?

FARRANT. I won't face him.

MR. HORSHAM. Dear Uncle Mark started me as his secretary at twenty-three . . . and he taught me to nourish no political illusions. Yet at sixty-five I am tempted to try this rather imaginative stroke . . . and I fail. I'm not surprised. But the calculation was such a nice one . . . such a combining of incompatibles! What a triumph . . . and how amusing . . . to have brought it off! Would you post this, then, in the corner pillar-box as you pass?

He has found a stamp in his pocket-book and has carefully stuck it on. But these reflections are of small comfort to FARRANT, who is feeling savage.

FARRANT. I just hope Trebell will give us hell next session . . . that's all.

CANTILUPE. What will happen to him, I wonder, Cyril?

MR. HORSHAM. Hard to say. Most men's careers work to a climax . . . and if they miss their moment the best of them may sink back to nonentity. A pity in this case . . . a pity. By the bye, Charles, there was something else I wanted a word with you about. The Giorgione portrait. Your mother mustn't sell it.

They have found their way to the door. FARRANT, indeed, is already on his way downstairs. But the two cousins pause in the doorway.

CANTILUPE. But she needs the money.

MR. HORSHAM. But it's the copy, I do assure you. It's the original that's at Holcroft. My father told me the whole story. Fotheringham got it out of Great-aunt Jane. He was cracked about pictures after he was sixty. She'd been his mistress, undoubtedly . . . and their later relations were unspeakable. All sorts of references to them had to be cut out of Creevey and . . . what's that other book?

CANTILUPE. But mother must pay her income-tax.

MR. HORSHAM. Well . . . if she tries to sell that picture all these old stories will be raked up. It will be most unpleasant for her. . . .

They go out together talking.

ACT IV

TREBELL'S room in the evening looks as you would expect it to look, except that, this evening, the curtains of the window are drawn back and we are conscious of the strange London darkness, which is never dark, outside. TREBELL and WEDGECROFT come up the stairs talking. WEDGECROFT carries his hat and wears his overcoat.

WEDGECROFT. Yes . . . when I saw the light I whistled the tune without a thought . . . and down you came !

TREBELL. I was thinking . . . at the moment . . . of my old room in Gower Street. . . .

.. *He puts a period to this preface by whistling the signal tune—all ardent Wagnerians used it in the eighteen-nineties—the Siegfried sword motif. Then WEDGECROFT begins . . .*

WEDGECROFT. Well . . . we're safe, I'm sure. O'Connell won't go back on you.

TREBELL. He's not committed to flat perjury, I hope. Nor you ?

WEDGECROFT. Oh . . . I rank as an expert witness.

TREBELL. Has the thing hit him very hard ?

WEDGECROFT. He's at odds with the world.

TREBELL. He can slip back to his thirteenth century . . . after to-morrow. Well, what more can you do for me, Gilbert ? I've been a lot of trouble to you, I'm afraid.

For WEDGECROFT is regarding him with a quizzical and not unanxious eye, in which friendly and pro-

fessional concern are mixed. TREBELL's voice has, indeed, an oddly hollow ring, and he walks with a curious lightness, as a man may feel himself walking in a dream.

WEDGECROFT. I'd like you to get some sleep to-night. When was your last good night's sleep?

TREBELL. I haven't slept for a night or so.

WEDGECROFT. I see. You'll swallow two of these when you go to bed . . .

He has fetched a little bottle out of his pocket, taken an envelope from the writing-table and is shaking some pellets into it.

TREBELL. No, no. They upset my inside . . . and my dignity.

WEDGECROFT. . . . and two more an hour later if need be.

TREBELL. Why not acid drops? Just as effective! I won't go to bed . . . that's the simplest plan.

WEDGECROFT. Confound you! . . . I'm thinking of your job, not of you. You must keep fit for it.

TREBELL. I told her that.

The casual inconsequence of this is jarring. But

WEDGECROFT holds his professional course.

WEDGECROFT. It has been a bad business. But drop the curtain of one good night's sleep on it . . . and I'll soon have you back to normal. By the way . . . how much . . . now . . . is Frances to know?

TREBELL. How much does she know? She'd hold her tongue to me . . . and expect me to hold mine to her. But she may have to be told now. Horsham may be throwing me over after all.

This, though, does knock WEDGECROFT off his balance.

WEDGECROFT. No!

TREBELL. Yes.

WEDGECROFT. In heaven's name . . . why?

TREBELL. It must be so vexing for you, Gilbert, to pull a patient through . . . and have him run over in the street a week after. And I'm told that then his executors always grumble when there's your bill to pay.

WEDGECROFT. Why the devil didn't I let you go to O'Connell when you wanted to? They need never have known.

TREBELL. True! I've been thinking of that. But they may not throw me over. I left them in conclave. So don't hint anything to Frances. She has just come in . . . I heard the car. Farrant will stroll round to tell me, I daresay. The window's for his benefit.

WEDGECROFT. If they throw you over now . . . the next one that calls me in . . . I'll poison him.

TREBELL. That's the spirit! But I rather wish I'd not given my virgin heart to a Bill of disestablishing the Church of England. Reckless of me!

FRANCES *comes upstairs hurriedly, a little breathless, disturbed.*

FRANCES. Henry! Oh, Gilbert . . . I'm so glad you're here.

TREBELL. 'Meistersingers' over early?

FRANCES. It's past twelve.

TREBELL. I said early.

FRANCES. I'm terribly upset. I heard as I was coming out in the crowd . . . Amy O'Connell's dead.

The two men keep their composure, but the talk takes on a certain restraint.

TREBELL. Gilbert has been telling me.

FRANCES. I knew she was ill. You weren't attending her?

WEDGECROFT. Yes.

FRANCES. But there's to be an inquest.

WEDGECROFT. To-morrow.

FRANCES. What's been wrong? Mustn't I ask?

TREBELL. I'll tell you. Gilbert's tired. He has done a day's work . . . and a bit.

WEDGECROFT. Good-night, then. Take that stuff. I'll be round about 9.30 . . . but if I hear you snoring I'll be the better pleased.

FRANCES. Are you ill, Henry? Hasn't he been sleeping?

WEDGECROFT. He's not ill. A nice little illness now and then . . . a little lowering of the physical pride . . . might be very good for him. Bless you both.

FRANCES. Bless you, dear Gilbert.

TREBELL. Pull the door to, hard, would you? The lock's loose or something.

WEDGECROFT *leaves them together.*

FRANCES. What about Amy?

TREBELL. An unwelcome baby was on the way. She went to some quack . . . and Gilbert couldn't save her.

FRANCES. Yes . . . that's the gossip. Terrible! Doubly terrible! The little fool! The little runaway!

One discovers in FRANCES a taste of her brother's ruthlessness. His response is somewhat acid.

TREBELL. The celibate's comment.

She has had, one must remember, half an hour in which to grieve for Amy's death; so her lively good sense is already in the ascendant.

FRANCES. No . . . come now! One may choose one's lot in life . . . but having chosen it . . . !

TREBELL. True. I didn't mean to gibe.

FRANCES. That wasn't all the trouble, though . . . surely?

TREBELL. I daresay not

FRANCES. Some affair she'd been having . . . ?

TREBELL. I daresay.

FRANCES. Even so . . . couldn't she have found some one with common sense to turn to . . . some

woman? Heavens . . . I didn't like her much . . . but I'd have done what I could. No . . . there it was! She was pretty and popular . . . she could make a party go . . . and men flirted with her. But when it came to this . . . she knew none of us liked her much. Oh . . . death leaves things so frustrate, doesn't it? I'd meant to go round there this morning. I think she did like me a little. Egoist! Another debt, then, I'll never pay.

TREBELL. I shouldn't worry about that. Our likes and dislikes go the round . . . in various disguises. The sum of the getting and giving works out pretty fairly.

This is sufficiently cryptic for FRANCES to ask him—though without too much intention . . .

FRANCES. Is this all you know?

TREBELL. It's all I can tell you for the moment.

They have a habit, these two, of saying what they mean to each other and accepting the thing said. It has been a business-like and not such a bad relationship.

FRANCES. Then I'll go to bed. Not that I'll sleep.

TREBELL. Try Gilbert's physic.

FRANCES. Poor Amy! Poor little fool!

TREBELL. Her epitaph.

FRANCES. Fear of life . . . the beginning of all evil.

TREBELL. Is it?

FRANCES. I've come to think so.

TREBELL. I've wondered lately whether you did right to give up your work to turn housekeeper for me.

FRANCES. It's a little late to be wondering that.

TREBELL. You were a pretty good teacher . . . and that's moral motherhood of a sort. Your young women were fond of you. Could you go back to it?

FRANCES. I wasn't very fond of them, I fear. Reason enough for giving up. I can spare you the self-sacrificing sister. No . . . I couldn't go back.

TREBELL. This need to care for people, Frankie, is the devil and all.

FRANCES. And when did it begin to trouble you? And what makes you call me by my nursery name for the first time in thirty years?

TREBELL. I don't know. But I should have sent you packing, perhaps. Why . . . we've never even had a quarrel.

To which touch of man humour she responds.

FRANCES. All the domestic joys missed. Never mind. You've been a credit to me. And time begins to slip by for us pretty quickly now, doesn't it? Good-night. Shall I give you these?

"These" are WEDGECROFT'S soporifics. But his thoughts are far from such matters.

TREBELL. No . . . no, thank you.

She goes towards him, as if—though not intrusively—she would like to get a little nearer to him, in another sense, if she could.

FRANCES. There's nothing troubling you . . . that you'd like to tell me?

TREBELL. No.

Nothing harsh about it; again, he just means what he says. But now, for a wonder, she does not leave it at that.

FRANCES. Has it been my fault you've never confided in me? You hate women . . . I've heard you say . . . when you can't altogether despise them. Yet I'm not so very womanly . . . in the worst sense . . . am I? If I thought you could ever come to be unhappy . . . as other people are . . . it would make me unhappy to be such a stranger to you.

TREBELL. If I ever come to be . . . waste no time on me. The egoist gone soft . . . I know nothing more contemptible.

FRANCES. No . . . you see other men so starkly as

they are . . . you're not built to be disillusioned about yourself. And you've never had a failure . . . never even been crossed in love. . . .

TREBELL. Never come within reach of the good woman's gospel of salvation. And I think, thank you, I'll keep out of it to the end. Go to bed . . . go to bed. I've to sit up for a bit yet . . . I'm expecting a message.

FRANCES. At this hour? And I don't even ask what about . . . though that would be human . . . even womanly! Very well. Don't work, though . . . or sit and think. You're tired. I'll choose you a book.

TREBELL. My mind was never clearer.

FRANCES. The rest of you is the more tired. Mark Twain?

As she moves to the bookcase those familiar red volumes face her.

TREBELL. Good . . . not a woman's choice, either. 'Huck Finn,' please. Mark was a sound fellow. He had comic courage. A gift. I'd choose it, I think, before any. Man's last weapon against the gods. When he's at his puniest . . . he can still laugh them into littleness . . . and come to his own standing again. Thank you. I'll give Mark his chance . . . to stop me thinking . . . if he can.

FRANCES. But I can't help?

TREBELL. No.

FRANCES. Very well.

Still his rejection of her is not harsh, nor purposefully cold. But the blank chill of it seems to rouse some inward anger in her now, as if her care for him must somehow struggle for its life. But the anger, too, stays dumb, and she turns away and leaves him.

Early the next morning she finds him there. He has

not moved, to all appearances. The fire is out, the lights are out; through the window, with its drawn back curtains, can be seen London's grey autumn sky. FRANCES has been disturbed in her dressing and has thrown a wrap about her to come down. The night has broken her composure, but it has set his hard.

FRANCES. Henry !

TREBELL. Yes ?

FRANCES. Bertha says you've not been to bed all night.

TREBELL. She's quite right. She came in to do the room. I fear I startled her.

FRANCES. I waited to hear you come up. I came down once to listen. Then I fell asleep. Did you fall asleep down here ?

TREBELL. No . . . I've not been to sleep.

FRANCES. I must know what's wrong. What was the message ? What has happened ?

TREBELL. The message didn't come. There might be a letter. Are they here yet ?

FRANCES. Yes . . . I don't know . . . yours are put in Walter's room.

TREBELL. I'll see.

He goes across to the little room and returns with a pile of twenty letters, it may be. He finds her, head bowed, face hidden, and she does not look up. As he sees her thus, suddenly forty years fall away : for so he has seen her time and again, in their rather shabby nursery schoolroom, childishly grieving. And the difference is not so great.

TREBELL. My dear . . . don't cry. You've had a bad night too . . . and where was the use of that ?

FRANCES. I'm not crying. I never cry.

TREBELL. What then ?

FRANCES. I think I was trying to pray.

TREBELL. Help me to look through these. The thing may be settled . . . past praying for.

He gives her a half of the letters and they begin to open them.

FRANCES. But I'm still angry, I'm afraid. When you said I couldn't help you . . . though God knows I knew it! . . . it made me angry to have you say it. But if I'd not been angry it would have hurt too badly. You may as well tell me the facts now about Amy O'Connell.

Mechanically, as she asks him, she is opening and glancing at the letters, putting them in an orderly pile, tearing the envelopes. He, as he answers her, is doing the same.

TREBELL. Yes . . . it was my child.

FRANCES. I'm a blind fool, I suppose. I never guessed you were in love with her.

TREBELL. I wasn't.

FRANCES. She with you, then.

TREBELL. It didn't last long. The little trull!

The thing is wrung from him. It releases her anger.

FRANCES. Henry . . . how can you be so vile as to say that of her . . . now?

TREBELL. It's the truth.

FRANCES. Whatever she was you were. And she has paid.

TREBELL. I've to pay. Whatever she'd done but this . . . I'd have faced it. Let's get through these letters.

Her anger is exhausted. The letter-opening has come to a standstill. Mechanically they start again.

FRANCES. If you'd loved her . . . only a little . . . she might have found courage to face it.

At this he turns to her in sudden poignant uncertainty.

TREBELL. D'you think so?

She is honest.

FRANCES. No. We are what we are, I suppose.

TREBELL. Then don't let us cant.

FRANCES. Will you dine with the Anglican League . . . and speak?

TREBELL. Put it over there . . . Walter can answer it.

The letter reminds her . . .

FRANCES. But what's to happen? Are people to know?

TREBELL. I've been got off that much.

FRANCES. This is marked Private.

TREBELL. Begging letter probably!

FRANCES. Oh . . . I know what she was. But you who've despised the best of us . . . and the best in us . . . you to be caught in the trap the cheapest of women can spread!

FRANCES does not, perhaps, quite comprehend the masculine nature. TREBELL (at this moment even) is a little short with her.

TREBELL. The best or the worst of you, my dear . . . if you'll all but go your own way and make it a straight way . . . we know where we are with you then.

FRANCES. This is from Mr. Horsham . . . he always initials his envelopes, doesn't he?

He asks for the letter (by a gesture) precisely, and yet, it would seem, indifferently. But this is not indifference; it is something far harder to survive, detachment. TREBELL is now taking a cool but genuine interest—in someone else's affairs.

FRANCES. Don't let us be harsh with each other . . . now. That's Cousin Robert's hand.

She pushes him over another letter. He has glanced through HORSHAM'S note, which FARRANT had put in the pillar-box the night before.

TREBELL. Thank you. Horsham will have no use for me in his Government.

FRANCES. Oh! Does that follow?

FRANCES *is blank at the news. Having finished HORSHAM's letter, he begins Cousin Robert's.*

TREBELL. Well . . . it has. Robert says it seems a long time since they had the pleasure of seeing me at Winfield . . . but that now I'm a greater man than ever I must of course be very busy. But he has been busy too . . . over a bazaar to raise money for his boys' club. And they've re-papered the rectory throughout . . . except the servants' rooms, which were done six years ago . . . and that has been an upset. And Mary sends you her love and hopes you've had no return of your rheumatism. And he wonders, if he could find time to run up to town, whether I wouldn't like an afternoon's talk with him upon my Disestablishment schemes. For, after all, his practical experience of the work of a country parish . . .

Slowly—for she is tired and her emotions have been stunned—the full scope of the catastrophe has opened out to FRANCES. And his detachment from it is the more dreadful to her.

FRANCES. Don't, Henry . . . don't! I can't bear it.

TREBELL. But he's quite right. I ought to have had a talk with him. And he remains my affectionate cousin. He has the neatest little signature.

A silence.

FRANCES. Mr. Horsham's quite definite?

TREBELL. He is kind enough to be.

FRANCES. Was it inevitable? Why . . . if there's to be no scandal?

TREBELL. A scandal half-stifled is worse than a scandal. One is at everybody's mercy. That's their excuse . . . but it isn't their reason for getting rid of me. No . . . I knew! I was trying them pretty high. Take the hard path and you can't afford to slip . . . the easier world is in a natural conspiracy against you.

FRANCES. But Mr. Horsham believed in you . . . and your plan.

TREBELL. Very nearly. But he'd have had a horrid time with me.

FRANCES. It'll tumble to pieces without you.

TREBELL. They'll patch up something . . . they'll muddle something through.

FRANCES. The best of it did seem too good to be true.

TREBELL. If I were God that's the one blasphemy I'd not forgive.

From the vengeful force of this you'd say there was hope in the man still. And—though she may not know it is this—it inspires her with a broken sort of hope.

FRANCES. Well, my dear . . . what now? All this will lie heavy on you for a little. But I see fifty futures for you still.

TREBELL might almost be amused : it is so easy to be hopeful for others.

TREBELL. Do you?

FRANCES. You're a free lance again. You made your name fighting the lot of them.

But somehow it doesn't sound very hopeful.

TREBELL. We don't travel the same road twice . . . except as ghosts. Oh . . . I could still make a show of success. Have my revenge on them too! A barren business. No. I'm done. I've come to the end. Walter will finish the letters.

He says it all so simply that it might mean little—or much.

FRANCES. To the end?

TREBELL. As far as I can see.

And the careless simplicity of that is suspicious.

FRANCES. That can't mean with you . . . what one might fear it to mean. Besides . . . if it did, you wouldn't be telling me, would you? But I know the

feeling. It has deadened us all at some time. It's a sign, though, that the worst's over.

He turns to her with a curious air of kindly, cold reproof.

TREBELL. If I'm to confide in you . . . for once !
. . . better believe I mean what I say.

FRANCES. But this one piece of work . . . had it come to mean everything to you ?

TREBELL. More.

FRANCES. More ?

TREBELL. Yes. I'd never, so to speak, given myself away before. It's a dreadful joy to do that . . . to become part of a purpose bigger than your own. Another strength is added to your own . . . it's a mystery. But it follows, you see, that having lost myself in the thing . . . the loss of it leaves me a dead man.

There is the sort of logic about this that speaks of the toppling mind. She eyes him rather fearfully, but her voice is calm, is comforting.

FRANCES. Yes . . . I understand. But these are only words.

TREBELL. D'you think so ? Death is a fact to be faced. And what is it that dies ? One may be dead for years . . . and who'll notice . . . if one keeps up appearances ? It's not good manners to notice. But why cumber the ground ? I once heard four doctors . . . Gilbert among them . . . disputing the moment, the exact moment, when they'd a right to say : This is death. I thought the corpse ought to know. And after some days . . . and nights . . . of consideration, I'm of the opinion that in all that matters to me I'm a dead man.

FRANCES. You're a sick man. And suffering is so strange to you.

TREBELL. I'm not suffering . . . far from it. While one suffers, one lives, I suppose.

FRANCES. Then there's a deeper hurt. Is it her death that's haunting you? But you didn't love her, you say.

He responds a little wearily: what have the dead to do with such mortal matters?

TREBELL. Can't you forgive me that? You'd hardly have forgiven me if I had.

FRANCES. Oh . . . I can be callous about her . . . if it'll help. What was she but a bit of base pleasure to you? And not fit to be more! Let's forget her, then.

TREBELL. I keep thinking of the child.

FRANCES. Is that the trouble?

TREBELL. Why . . . has it no right to be?

This, oddly enough, is a new and unexpected light on the matter to FRANCES. But, surely, there can be no incurable trouble here.

FRANCES. My dear . . . it was dreadful . . . the thing she did . . . dreadfully wrong. But after all . . . babies enough don't get born. We must take a practical view of it.

A ruthless little smile flickers across his face, and is gone.

TREBELL. Women do . . . for they have to . . . who's to blame them? But men's travail is of the soul. And if this new power coming to birth in me has been killed now . . . as wantonly as she denied life to that child . . . ! I'd rather like to think Fate could be so subtle in revenge.

Whatever answer can she make?

FRANCES. This isn't sane! It isn't sane!

TREBELL. By other measure than our thrifty sanity my life may well be of no more account than that balked scrap of being was.

If she can say nothing to combat these delusions—monstrous delusions!—she must do something at

least. She has hold of his hand, she can grip his arm ; and these are alive.

FRANCES. I shan't leave you . . . till you've promised . . . to do nothing foolish.

This time he smiles irrefutably.

TREBELL. We can't sit here, you know, and hold hands for ever. And if I meant to add that death to the other . . . though I've not said I mean to, have I ? . . . a jump from the window and a broken neck . . . or a broken promise . . . yes, even to you ! . . . what could be simpler ?

She does not loose him ; she searches desperately for other help.

FRANCES. Will you come away with me ?

TREBELL. Where ?

FRANCES. I don't think it matters . . . as long as we cut free, for a little, from this tangle of failure. What's to stop us walking out of the door and away . . . this very minute ?

He is provokingly patient.

TREBELL. Nothing.

FRANCES. Let's break prison, my dear . . . no matter how. D'you remember being taken from school that summer Mother was dying . . . and sent out all day . . . and we followed back each one of those streams in the hills there till we found out where it rose ? Well, let's go gipsying now . . . we're not so dreadfully middle-aged. We could turn our backs to the sea, once we'd crossed it. We could walk up a real river now. That's the only right way to the mountains. We'd reach them by springtime . . . when the passes are opening . . . and you see flowers in the snow. I did walk down into Carinthia once . . . one Easter . . . sleeping where I found myself when night came . . . and the people were so simple and kind. Why stay in a prison just because you've built

it . . . when the whole world belongs to you? We'll walk on and on . . . day after day . . . and not talk much . . . and only be tired in body . . . till we feel alive again . . . and in tune again . . . till the touch of common things has healed us.

TREBELL. And till we finish where we started. What a pity the world's round! The most depressing discovery ever made. Should we write a book too? You've the romantic touch. But a tour of the Empire's my move, surely . . . by all the rules!

She has failed.

FRANCES. Very well. It should be some comfort, I suppose, to find you can still mock at me.

TREBELL. I'm sorry. But the fact is that, for a selfish man, I'm not as much interested in myself as you might think. I'm done for . . . I'm done with. I wish my job were done . . . but, really, it would be pompous to complain. If I'd life in me . . . nothing that has happened would matter a straw. I've none . . . so do I matter? And I'm quite sane, I assure you. I've not been sleeping, it's true. But I read 'Huck Finn' for an hour and had a good laugh. I was hungry . . . and I raided the larder for some bread and cheese. I said I'd give one more sunrise its chance. But my light's out.

What more can she say, or do? She speaks calmly.

FRANCES. Very well. I won't vex you any more now, as long as I know . . . don't promise; I don't want a promise . . . that you'll do nothing foolish . . . or irretrievable. And we'll have another talk in a week's time, shall we? After all . . . what's a week . . . now the worst's over? And you'll sleep now.

TREBELL. I'd be glad of some sleep.

She has freed him; and she stands by him, watchfully, would-be trustfully.

FRANCES. I love you . . . you're all I've ever loved. Till you are yourself again . . . find a little life in that.

He does not answer. There is an empty moment.

TREBELL. But now you must get dressed, mustn't you? And I need a shave . . . so don't lock up my razors.

She gives a nan little laugh.

FRANCES. I'd meant to.

TREBELL. What's a week . . . as you say . . . or a year . . . or ten? Who'd bargain for life on such terms . . . even if he could? Time's no measure, is it, of the things men have made honourable? And whatever our failings, Frankie, we've meant to live . . . you and I . . . in the large freedom of the mind. So let's be true to it. My faith . . . a man needs one when he faces the ignorance of death . . . is that Nature is spendthrift . . . yet the God to whose creating we travail may be infinitely economical and waste, perhaps, less of the wealth of us when we're dead than we waste in the faithlessness and slavery of our lives.

That much liveliness of thought in him seems to comfort her. And she is so ready to find comfort.

FRANCES. My dear! I've not been very sane myself, I think. But all's well now . . . all's going to be.

TREBELL. That's a large order. Here's Bertha come to do the room.

BERTHA had appeared, somewhat doubtfully. But hearing this last she takes it she is to do the room at last. BERTHA has the air of a housemaid many years settled in her place, whom town life has never despoiled of her country training. The tension of their talk together thus finally broken, FRANCES turns to go, in ease of mind now, giving a final look at her brother and saying . . .

FRANCES. And we might break prison for a little . . . all the same.

When she has gone he begins to pick up the letters from the table, keeping them, as far as he can, in their tidied heaps.

TREBELL. Give me those, will you? Then you can dust. Did you have a good holiday?

BERTHA. Yes, sir . . . thank you, sir. And I hope you had the same.

To be sure; not three weeks ago he was in Italy!

TREBELL. Yes, thank you, Bertha . . . so I did!

He carries the letters through to leave them on WALTER KENT'S table, and comes out again, closing the door behind him with a certain decision. Then he goes upstairs, leaving BERTHA to do the room.

.

An hour or so later (the room has been done) we find WEDGE CROFT sitting at the big table writing a letter. FRANCES, fully dressed now, comes upstairs and stands beside him waiting for him to finish before she speaks. But he does not keep her waiting so long. When she speaks there is death in her voice, as in her face—though not her own death.

WEDGE CROFT. Yes?

FRANCES. Mr. Horsham's downstairs . . . and I can't see him . . . I can't! He has come to sympathise, I suppose. What are you writing?

WEDGE CROFT. Only a note to . . . to the police surgeon. All right . . . I'll see Horsham.

FRANCES. I've taken the revolver out of his hand. Was that wrong . . . shouldn't I have touched it?

WEDGE CROFT. No, of course not! You must stay out of the room. I ought to have locked the door.

FRANCES. I'm sorry. I couldn't bear, somehow, to see the revolver in his hand. I won't go back. He's

not there in the room any more, is he? But the spirit must stay by the body for a little, you'd think. And his face is so eager still.

WEDGECROFT. Hush . . . hush!

He puts out a soothing hand towards hers, and she pulls herself together again. LADY JULIA FARRANT has come quietly into the room. She stands for a moment, sympathetically silent, till FRANCES, conscious of her, turns. Sympathy is unnerving: she droops into LADY JULIA'S arms.

FRANCES. Julia!

LADY JULIA. Oh . . . dear friend . . . poor friend! I brought Cyril Horsham. He felt he must come.

WEDGECROFT. I'll see him.

He speaks brusquely. His compassion is not at all of this kind. He has finished his letter. He gets up and goes downstairs. LADY JULIA makes FRANCES sit down and sits down by her.

LADY JULIA. Don't try to talk. Walter has told me . . . just what happened.

But FRANCES is herself again.

FRANCES. I don't mind talking. I was in my bedroom when I heard the shot. We'd been sitting here together not ten minutes before.

LADY JULIA. But why . . . oh, why? Not because he'd lost this chance of office? That wasn't like him. Oh . . . I don't want Cyril Horsham to think that! And even if the scandal had broken . . . nowadays everything's forgotten so soon. No one dreamed her death would upset him so.

FRANCES turns an inquiring gaze on her friend, who now, indeed, seems more distracted—certainly more unguarded—than she.

FRANCES. Did you know . . . about Amy?

LADY JULIA. No one knew, of course . . . and it couldn't have lasted any time. But she always had to

show off her conquests. People joked about it for a week or two.

FRANCES. I never knew. Why didn't you tell me? I might have saved her.

LADY JULIA. My dear . . . how could I? Besides, you never wanted to know . . . about that sort of thing.

FRANCES *sits silent for a moment. Then she looks at LADY JULIA again; but no longer questioning, rather as if all questions were now answered.*

FRANCES. We should never have had anything to do with you, Julia . . . no, not with any of you . . . he or I. We weren't your sort, I'm afraid. Will you go away now, please?

No trace of anger in her voice. But LADY JULIA is amazed, hurt, wounded, and bereft of words.

LADY JULIA. Frances . . . dear Frances!

FRANCES. Oh . . . I'm sure you're very fond of me. You're not heartless . . . you and the rest of you . . . nor hypocrites . . . nor even so selfish as you might be. For you've just got to be greedy, haven't you, of the things you need from the people who can help keep you where you are? And you were making good use of him. You've always been kind to me, Julia . . . and I'm fond of you, too. I never quite lost my head, did I, in your flattering world? Nor he! We both knew the worth of it, I think . . . and our worth to you. But for all that, I suppose, we weren't wise enough at heart in its ways. And now he's dead in the toils of them. Yes . . . you're sorry, I'm sure . . . and you're still kind. But he was half my life to me . . . and more. So now will you let us be strangers again for a little, please?

LADY JULIA, *recovered, makes with gentleness, with dignity, with true kindness and affection, what is surely the right answer.*

LADY JULIA. Dear Frances . . . there's nothing you mayn't say to me . . . and in anger . . . if that eases the hurt. Only don't think that things said so are true . . . for then to have said them makes the hurt worse later on.

As if the hurt mattered ! As if (thinks FRANCES) anything they could feel or say or do would bring him back ! But all she says is . . .

FRANCES. I am not angry.

WALTER KENT, *head dropped, fists clenched, comes upstairs and turns into his own room. WEDGE CROFT follows him and comes in to fetch the letter he wrote.*

WEDGE CROFT. Horsham is just going. He asked me to tell you he was sure he could keep the worst out of the papers. He thought you'd be staying with Frances, Lady Julia. Can he have your car ?

There is something in all this, and in his tone, which does not, somehow, support HORSHAM'S reputation for sympathy—of which LADY JULIA is very tender.

LADY JULIA. But he's dreadfully upset, isn't he ? Have you ever seen him so upset ?

WEDGE CROFT. Never.

Dear GILBERT WEDGE CROFT is really most unpromising. She gets up to go.

LADY JULIA. Send for me soon, Frances dear. Tell Walter to. You'll have him here to help, won't you ? He's heart-broken.

FRANCES. Yes. Thank you, Julia. You're very kind.

As it happens she has said it quite mechanically ; her thoughts are in that room upstairs. But poor LADY JULIA is flooded by self-consciousness and says in deprecating protest. . .

LADY JULIA. No . . . not just kind ! Do believe that . . . do try to believe that of me, Frances . . . please !

FRANCES. Yes, yes . . . I'll believe it.

If she'll only go ! She goes ; a little hurt, but as sympathetic as when she came. WEDGECROFT'S brusqueness is a comforting change.

WEDGECROFT. Don't let any one else fuss you. I'll come back and see to things. But I have to go now . . . for an hour.

FRANCES. To the other inquest ?

WEDGECROFT. [*unwillingly.*] Yes.

FRANCES. Yes, of course.

WEDGECROFT, *on the point of leaving, feels he must be just to HORSHAM, who had—though so unwittingly—angered him a little.*

WEDGECROFT. Horsham blamed himself bitterly . . . and he is very, very upset. Dear Frances . . . you've pluck enough for twenty.

FRANCES. No. I'm stunned. I shall come round . . . and it'll hurt . . . and I still want it to. Then I shall wonder why he did it. Now I know . . . glimmeringly.

WEDGECROFT. Do you ?

FRANCES. Why . . . when you come to think of it, Gilbert . . . life, for its own sake, is an over-rated thing.

WEDGECROFT, *who will not play the professional comforter, says no more but goes. As he passes WALTER emerging from his room the two exchange British greetings.*

WEDGECROFT. Hullo.

WALTER KENT. Hullo.

WALTER *has some papers in his hand which he is bringing, without much thinking why, to put on TREBELL'S table. He is undisguisedly crying. He sees FRANCES sitting there, silent, still. He gulps out . . .*

WALTER KENT. Selfish of me to make a fool of myself before you !

FRANCES. No, Walter, no . . . I'll cry when I can.

WALTER KENT. I'm not grieving . . . I'm angry. I don't want to whisper and hide things. I'd like to go through the streets and shout that he's dead . . . that they've lost him and wasted him, damn them! With his work all undone! Who's to do it? Much they care! What did they know of him? We knew. I cared. I was nothing to him . . . but I cared. That's waste too. What does it matter? Oh, the waste of him . . . oh, the waste . . . the waste!

But this is very foolish, and quite useless.

